

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND THE WORD:
AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH
IN CONTEMPORARY LUTHERANISM

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, under the Joint Committee on
Graduate Instruction, Columbia University.

Kent S. Knutson

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• ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine certain concepts of the church in contemporary Lutheranism with the view toward drawing conclusions concerning the natures and causes of the similarities and differences among them.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part I, entitled ORIGINAL LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH, considers the original concepts of the church in Lutheranism as seen in Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession. The background and reasons for the contemporary situation in Lutheranism are outlined and documented. Part II, entitled CONTEMPORARY LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH, constitutes the principal section of the study and contains four exhibits which delineate the main concepts in contemporary Lutheranism. The view of the Repristination School is represented by Francis Pieper of the United States, and is entitled COETUS

ELECTORUM, A SUPERNATURALISTIC CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH.

Contemporary Pietism is analyzed through its representative, Ole Hallesby of Norway, under the title, GOD'S FAMILY ON EARTH, A PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH. Lundensian Theology, with Bishop Gustaf Aulen and Bishop Anders Nygren of Sweden as spokesmen, is examined under the title, CORPUS CHRISTI, AN ONTOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH. Contemporary Neo-Lutheranism or Neo-confessionalism is exhibited by an examination of the works of Edmund Schlink of Germany under the caption, THE PILGRIM PEOPLE, A DYNAMIC CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH.

A short history and general description of the theological position of each type introduces the discussions. Particular emphasis is placed upon the varying views of "Word," faith, and community in each instance.

Four main conclusions are reached in the concluding chapter, which is entitled LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH. First: The doctrine of the church is not an exception to the widely recognized judgment that contemporary Lutheranism presents a confused and contradictory picture of its relationships to its origins. No general statement can be made that Lutheranism holds and teaches Luther's or the Confessions' concept of the church. The four contemporary schools vary widely in their interpretation of their origins. Second: The four contemporary schools exhibit such deep and serious diver-

gencies in their relationships to each other that, despite important ideas which they do hold in common, they cannot be said to explain or define a common concept of the church. They vary from the completely individualistic, with the exclusion of any real community, to the completely communal, with the near exclusion of the individual. The two schools in between begin at different points, one with the individual building toward community and the other holding a basically communal view which at the same time protects the integrity of the individual within it. Third: The causes of the divergencies lie basically, not within the concept of the church itself, but in the prolegomena to the respective theological system, that is, in the view of the Word of God and faith. Lutherans cannot, therefore, deal successfully with the problem of the church by isolating it from the rest of their theology. Fourth: The conclusion should not be drawn that these four concepts of the church are accurately reflected in the life of the Lutheran churches or that Lutherans cannot live together in one church because they do not hold to one common and fully mutually acceptable concept of the church.

Concluding suggestions are made as to the possible open lines of development for the Lutherans in their quest for a common concept of the church.

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PREFACE

The suggestion for the subject of this dissertation came from Dr. Wilhelm Pauck after he had learned of my interest in the doctrine of the church. That interest is of long standing. It began when, as a student in Chemical Engineering at Iowa State University, I became active in the Student Christian Movement, and through the Lutheran Student Association of America and the United Student Christian Council (now known as the National Student Christian Federation) I was introduced to the ecumenical movement. The interest was intensified when, after enrolling at Luther Theological Seminary to prepare for the Lutheran ministry, I discovered the deep theological clefts which ran through even the small denomination I was preparing to serve. Graduate studies at the great educational centers of Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary made it still more apparent to me that one of the greatest problems in Lutheranism, and a problem which the Lutherans have not fully acknowledged, is their concept of the church. Further study in Scandinavia and Germany with the resulting close acquaintanceship with the World Council of Churches, especially its Department of Faith and Order, and the Lutheran World Federation, brought me to grips with the overwhelming evidence that world Lutheranism needs to re-examine its understanding of the nature of the church.

I suspect that one of the most valuable experiences, however, was that of being a parish pastor for five years. While this regretfully delayed the completion of this study, it also brought me closer to the life of the church than I had ever been. Here in a microcosm I saw the church as it is.

Acknowledgments in a preface must necessarily be brief. I wish to thank Dr. Pauck, my chief adviser, who has given many hours to personal consultation with me. I wish to express my appreciation also to Dr. Horace Friess, who has been most gracious and co-operative, to the other members of the Joint Committee on Graduate Instruction in the Field of Religion, and to the faculties of Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary who have been my teachers. The faculty of Luther Theological Seminary, who are now my colleagues, especially the President, Dr. Alvin Rogness, the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Warren Quanbeck, and the head of the Department of Systematic Theology, Dr. George Aus, receive my thanks for granting me one quarter's leave of absence so that I might further pursue this research.

My deepest gratitude I reserve for my wife, Norma, whose apparently limitless patience and cheerful sacrifice of many hours of companionship in the interest of this dissertation, cannot be documented. My thanks, too, to Miss Alma Roisum for the unhappy task of devoting hot summer days to the typing of the final manuscript.

Kent S. Knutson

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine certain concepts of the church in contemporary Lutheranism with the view toward drawing conclusions concerning the natures and causes of the similarities and differences among them.

The concept of the church is defined as that which pertains to the nature of the church and encompasses the answer to the question, What is the church in itself? Related concepts, such as the sacraments, the ministry, order, discipline, etc., are considered only insofar as they are considered important by the particular view under discussion. Lutheranism is understood to mean that movement which developed under the auspices of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, especially due to the influence of Martin Luther, and which today is divided into ecclesiastical units which adhere in some way to part or all of the Lutheran Confessions contained in the Book of Concord of 1580.

The Problems and the Procedure

The first problem with which we had to deal was the determination of the number of concepts to be considered. The research revealed the existence of four major concepts of the church in contemporary Lutheranism. By a major concept we mean one of such importance that it can be considered

the view of a large section of the Lutheran population, is undergirded by a theological work of international reputation, and is recognized by the majority of Lutherans as an authentic part of the Lutheran tradition. Two are "old" views, growing out of the historic manifestations of Lutheranism known as seventeenth century orthodoxy and eighteenth century Pietism. Two are relatively "new" interpretations, being part of the rediscovery of the church in the twentieth century and associated with two theological schools, known as Lundensian Theology and the Neo-Lutherans of Germany.

Two concepts of the church of some importance in Lutheranism, but not considered major concepts, are not included. They are the concepts held by the Grundtvigians in Denmark and the so-called "high church" movements in Sweden and Germany. The Grundtvigian view¹ came into being under the influence of N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), a great national and religious figure in Denmark.² Except for a very small following in the United States, this concept is almost entirely limited to the Church of Denmark.³ It has been on the wane in the twentieth century, except for a brief revival during World War II under the leadership of Hal Koch, professor of History at the Uni-

¹ A brief description of this position is found in J. P. Bang, The Nature and Function of the Church, trans. Ernest D. Nielsen (Cedar Falls: Danish Book Concern, 1940).

² Several biographies are available. The best is Johannes Knudsen, Danish Rebel (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955).

³ The Danish church in the United States which acknowledges a debt to Grundtvig is the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, which in 1957 had a membership of 22,430.

versity of Copenhagen. Most Lutheran theologians in Denmark who would consider themselves as spokesmen for this tradition would also associate themselves with the New Lutherans of Germany and see in that movement the expression of their main concerns.¹

The "high churchmen" in Lutheranism are very much in the minority. With the exception of some sporadic appearances in the United States,² their chief strength is in the Berneuchen movement in Germany under the leadership of Wilhelm Stählin³ and in the high liturgical movement in Sweden under the leadership of a parish pastor, Gunnar Rosendal, with some sympathies issuing from Uppsala University. The Berneuchen movement is of some importance but, again, its chief interest, the proper emphasis upon the sacrament and the liturgy, is also represented by the Neo-Lutherans to some degree. The Swedish movement is more Anglican than Lutheran and a question could be raised as to its right to be included in our definition of Lutheranism.

In any case, the inclusion of these two main minority views would not change the conclusions of this study and would not add materially to an understanding of the situation in world Lutheranism regarding the concept of the church.

The second problem concerned the ways in which the na-

¹The chief example is Regin Prenter of Aarhus University, author of Spiritus Creator, trans. John Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953).

²An example of their interest is the periodical Una Sancta.

³This view is described in Wilhelm Stählin, The Mystery of God, trans. R. Birch Hoyle (London: SCM Press, 1937).

ture of the relationships among the concepts might best be determined and analyzed. We found it quite obvious that the concept of the church could not be treated in an isolated fashion. The different theological systems are so integrated that if we were to get at the root of the problems, we had to investigate the theological milieu out of which the particular concepts emerge. This involved, first, the determination of the decisive elements in the theological view which would describe the basic character of the system, and, second, the determination of the relationships of the contemporary concepts to the concepts in original Lutheranism. We decided, therefore, not only to include in the description of each concept introductions to the historical roots and the whole theological position, but to expand the dissertation to include an analysis of the two basic origins of Lutheranism, the theology of Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. This created two new problems: First, in order to keep the dissertation to a workable length, these introductions would have to be confined to descriptions of a rather general nature, thus inviting possible misinterpretation or, at the very least, boring generalizations. Second, the inclusion of original Lutheranism brought into the picture such a vast amount of literature that complete coverage in one research project seemed nearly impossible.

We decided to accept the hazards of this first new problem, being convinced that the historical and theological surveys do add to the understanding of particular concepts, even though they are general in nature. The concepts of the church are so closely allied with their historical developments

and with the prolegomena of their theological systems that to ignore these would betray the purpose of the dissertation. The nature and the causes of the differences cannot be understood without them.

The second problem necessitated several decisions as to how the study might be limited without impairing its value. We decided, first, to base the discussion on the theology of Luther on secondary works. This enhances its value, we believe, because it then summarizes the great contributions made to Luther research in this century, and becomes a more objective base for the later discussions and conclusions. Both Lutheran and non-Lutheran contributions are considered.

Second, we discovered that the four major contemporary concepts could be treated adequately by choosing representatives for them. It was quite clear that Francis Pieper of the United States represents the largest section of Lutheranism adhering to a repristination theology, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Only one world-wide known spokesman for the pietists exists, and he is Ole Hallesby, venerated and influential theological professor in Norway. The leaders of the Lundensian School, Bishop Gustaf Aulen¹ and Bishop Anders Nygren, could without question fairly represent that view. In the case of the Neo-Lutherans of Germany, the choice was not as obvious. There is no acknowledged spokesman. We decided to choose Edmund Schlink of Heidelberg University because he has been the chief representative of the German churches in

¹We have chosen to Anglicize the spelling of Bishop Aulen's name and will omit the accent (Aulén).

the Faith and Order Movement and is the most widely known theologian of that movement in both ecumenical and Lutheran circles.

This decision was bolstered by the discovery that the four concepts are actually four different types of the church and their dissimilarities are great enough so that they can be described and compared more easily than had at first been anticipated.

As a further help in managing the breadth of the subject, we interpreted the concepts of the church through use of three basic concepts of the Lutheran faith. These concepts are "the Word of God," "faith," and "community." The description of Luther's concept of the church provides the basic pattern for these keys to understanding Lutheranism. These basic concepts are used thereafter in the discussion of each concept of the church. The reason for the title is now evident. Lutherans do generally conceive of the church as the community of faith and the Word, even though we shall criticize the repristination school for abandoning any real meaning of community in their interpretation.

In accordance with these decisions, the study will proceed in the following manner: Part I, entitled ORIGINAL LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH, will consider the origins of the concepts of the church in Lutheranism. Chapter I will deal with the figure of Martin Luther, and Chapter II with the Lutheran Confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession. The background and reasons for the contemporary situation in Lutheranism are outlined and documented.

Part II, entitled CONTEMPORARY LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH, constitutes the main section of the study and contains four exhibits which delineate the main concepts of the church in contemporary Lutheranism. The chapters are given titles and subtitles which suggest the main emphasis of the concept to be discussed. Chapter III examines the views of the repristination school, represented by Francis Pieper. Chapter IV investigates the pietists through the works of Ole Hallesby. The Lundensians, with Bishop Gustaf Aulen and Bishop Anders Nygren as spokesmen, are considered in Chapter V. Edmund Schlink represents the neo-Lutherans of Germany in Chapter VI. The last chapter will draw certain conclusions.

The Need

"No idea was more important in Luther's whole work than that of the church."¹ This statement, which could be said so firmly without a storm of protest in 1950, would have been unthinkable anytime between the death of Luther in 1546 and the Second World War. The notion would have been greeted in general Lutheranism either as absurd or of little consequence. Indeed, one could go so far as to say of that long stretch of time that hardly any idea was less important to Lutheranism than that of the church.

Melanchthon, Luther's great friend and successor, did not include a locus on the church in his first edition of the Loci Communes of 1521, even though this work was used as the

¹Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p. 26.

basic textbook in the training of Lutheran pastors. The second edition, issued in 1535, did include a definition of the church, but it already showed departures from Luther's dynamic view.¹ The tragic controversies which beset the Lutheran movement in the years between Luther's death and the issuance of the Book of Concord in 1580 did not include the doctrine of the church.

The Lutheran Confessions do define the church on several occasions, and succinctly, but the genius of Luther is not fully preserved in them, even though Luther himself authored several of the discussions on the church.² It is apparent that the concept of the church occupies a secondary place in the Confessions. The Augsburg Confession, which became the chief confessional document, does not give a full definition of what the church is. The most important article concerning the church, Article VII, "offers no thoughtful deductions on the nature of the church but takes the reality of the church as given."³

It would be too brash to say that no attention was given this doctrine from 1580 until 1920, but the emphasis was peripheral. If an individual became interested, his interest was not shared by the church as a whole. Most dogmatics textbooks, if they included the church to any degree at all, put

¹ Reinhold Seeberg, Studien zur Geschichte des Begriffes der Kirche (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1885, pp. 815ff. See here an interesting discussion of Seeberg's view regarding this development.

² Notably the Large Catechism and the Smalcald Articles.

³ Ernst Kinder, "Basic Considerations with Reference to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession," The Unity of the Church, ed. Lutheran World Federation (Rock Island: Augustana Press, 1957), p. 59.

this doctrine in the last chapter, unless it was succeeded by a short discourse on eschatology.

The nineteenth century saw a reawakening of interest.¹ The new emphasis upon the church was fostered by a neo-confessionalism and a romantic view of Luther which did not have enough creative power to affect Lutheranism as a whole. This interest in the doctrine of the church, however, was not shared by the followers of the modern theology who dominated the age. Their general point of view was illustrated by a most distinguished theologian at the end of that century, Adolf V. Harnack, who gave his famous series of lectures at the University of Berlin entitled "What is Christianity?" without seriously considering the nature of the church. "The theme was that Christianity was chiefly to be regarded as an individualistic relationship to God. The church had significance only of second or third rank and did not belong to that which was essential."²

K. E. Skydsgaard relates the story of the visit of the German theologian Wilhelm Herrmann to the University of Uppsala about 1910. Here he learned of a young student named Gustaf Aulen, later to become a leading Swedish professor and bishop, who was working on his doctoral dissertation with the subject,

¹Holsten Fagerberg, Bekenntnis Kirche und Amt in der Deutschen Konfessionellen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1952). An excellent analysis of the trends in confessional theology in Germany in the last century.

²K. E. Skydsgaard, One in Christ (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 93.

"Luther's Conception of the Church."¹ Herrmann's remark, as Skydsgaard reports it, was, "I congratulate Swedish theology that it has so much time and peace that it can occupy itself with something so peripheral."² This was the typical sentiment at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lutheranism was not alone in its attitude. "Protestantism has no church in the full Christian sense,"³ was a charge made often in the decades that followed.

The twentieth century brought new developments. For the first time since the Reformation, there is a widespread effort to discover and present a whole understanding of the nature of the church. There is definitely a "new look." Many forces, sociological, political, ecclesiastical, and academic have combined to put the question of the church as a prime theological problem. Karl Barth and Otto Dibelius agree that the "Church has been more talked about during the three decades since the First World War, which we have behind us, than in the 18th and 19th centuries together."⁴ The decade since this remark was made has seen a continued outpouring of literature about the church.⁵

¹Later published as Till Belysning af Den Lutherske Kyrk-
oiden (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell Boktryckeri AB, 1912).

²Skydsgaard, op. cit., p. 93.

³Herman Preus, The Communion of Saints (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1948), p. 3.

⁴Karl Barth, "The Real Church," Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Dec., 1950), p. 337.

⁵J. Robert Nelson, The Realm of Redemption (London: The Epworth Press, 1951) is a summary of the conversations up to that point. Claude Welch, The Reality of the Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958) may be said to bring the summary up to date.

In view of the abundance of conversation regarding the church, the question as to whether or not another book on the church is needed might be asked. Three reasons may be advanced in defense of the need for this study.

(1) The fact of the multiplicity of the Lutheran views has not been examined in the welter of new material. On the contrary, the assumption is generally made that there is a carefully defined Lutheran concept of the church which may be used in ecumenical discussions as the official Lutheran view. The nature of the church is usually considered to be adequately defined in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession.¹ The general belief is that the Lutherans quarrel about a lot of things but the church is not one of them.² Because the image of Lutheranism in world Protestantism is that of a common theological front, this attitude is not surprising. Lutherans themselves, for the most part, have not yet discovered that there are difficulties in the concept of the church that divide them as deeply as many other issues.

This study is intended to document the view that Lutheranism embodies essentially different concepts of the church. While it may be admitted that there are limits to the divergent opinions,

¹As an example, see Einar Molland, Christendom (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 201. A very competent Lutheran historian says, "Lutheranism is also distinguished from other Churches by its doctrine of the Church. The classical Lutheran definition occurs in Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession . . ."

²K. E. Skydsgaard, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, ed. R. Newton Flew (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1952), p. 71. Skydsgaard is one of the few who admit that "Even within the confines of a single country it would be difficult task to give a collective impression of the view taken about the Church to which all could give assent."

the differences are too great to be subsumed under one concept. Lutheranism is as broad in its concept of the church as all of Protestantism. In presenting this evidence, this study hopes to be of service to the discussions about the church which have, as yet, a long way to go before any really satisfactory ends are served.¹

(2) There is need for a study which describes the situation in Lutheranism as it actually is in its churches. The assumption cannot be made that the new developments in Lutheranism concerning the church accurately reflect Lutheranism as a whole. The "new look" must be placed alongside the "old look" if there is to be any real understanding of the actual circumstances in Lutheranism. The latest suggestion of what the Lutherans should believe does not necessarily mirror accurately what they do indeed believe.

It cannot be denied that there have been gigantic changes in Lutheranism in this century. Lutherans number about 71,000,000,

¹The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lund, Sweden, in 1952, made the historic grand assault on the problem of the church. Years of study had gone into preparations for the conference and there was hope because of the successful agreement on the doctrine of grace at the Second Conference in Edinburgh in 1937 that some real advance might be made toward agreement on the nature of the church. The attack was repulsed. It was generally agreed that the doctrine of the church remained as difficult a problem as ever. The Conference report says: "We have seen clearly that we can make no real advance toward unity if we only compare our several conceptions of the nature of the Church and the traditions in which they are embodied. . . . We would, therefore, earnestly request our Churches to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the people of God." Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order (London: John Roberts Press Ltd., 1952), pp. 5, 6. This study is in a sense an answer to the request that each of the churches consider their own situation in the light of the impasse here reached and the great deal of work yet to be done.

according to a 1959 census.¹ They center in three geographic areas. About 40,000,000 are in central Europe, the bulk in Germany. About 20,000,000 reside in northern Europe in the Scandinavian countries, and approximately 8,000,000 in North America. Lutherans inhabit those countries in the West that have seen some of the greatest political and sociological upheavals of the century. They represent a great diversity of custom and organization as well as linguistic and ethnic groups. Yet some of the common experiences of the last forty years have made the Lutherans much more aware of each other and of the changes that have taken place in their respective areas.²

Following World War I, the Lutheran World Convention was organized and met for the first time in Eisenach in 1923. This was the first significant confrontation of Lutherans with one another since the Reformation. Following World War II this Convention was re-organized and made into a more effective agency called the Lutheran World Federation.³ It has had World Assemblies at Hannover in 1952 and Minneapolis in 1957 and has been a powerful force in making the Lutherans converse together concerning their mutual problems. It has as well been an enormously effective arm of the Lutheran churches in the

¹News Bureau, National Lutheran Council, 50 Madison Avenue, New York, May, 1959.

²These political and sociological influences are discussed and documented in Lutheran Churches of the World, 1952 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1952).

³Siegfried Grundmann, Der Lutherische Weltbund (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1957). This is one of the more complete sources of information on the history, work, and character of the Lutheran World Federation.

areas of mission co-operation and world relief.¹

This century has also seen the emergence of a new theological situation. The century had begun with the conflict between liberal and conservative theology as the most conspicuous feature of Lutheran church life. These two wings had their own organizations, clerical and lay, their own theological seminaries, and periodicals. In Norway and Germany particularly the two parties produced great strife in the churches. After the First World War a change in the spiritual climate was observable. The optimistic belief in progress which had been one of the fundamental motifs of liberal theology was gradually dissipated. The eschatological outlook of the New Testament, which had been neglected by this wing, was revived and became an active area of discussion. The emphasis on individualism, so much a part of nineteenth century thinking, gave way to a new appreciation of community. On the other side, the conservatives' rejection of the methods of Biblical research was softened and Biblical criticism became in turn an accepted tool of most of the theological world.

One of the most important factors which contributed to this change in the climate was the Luther renaissance. Although research in Luther was not new, an additional feature appeared after the turn of the century. A stream of monographs on the various aspects of Luther's views has exhibited the differences between his theological thought and the generally accepted ideas of Lutheran theology, and at the same time

¹For this story see Richard W. Solberg, As Between Brothers (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1957).

has described the relevance of Luther to the modern theological situation and its new understanding. Pioneers in this turn of events were the German scholars Karl Holl, Reinhold Seeberg, Carl Stange, Heinrich Boehmer, Emmanuel Hirsch, and others. Outside Germany the Swedish theologians Einar Billing and Nathan Söderblom inaugurated a Luther School in Scandinavia. This movement has since snowballed until it has captured the imagination of many scholars outside of the Lutheran fold.

One of the features of this Luther research is the new light it sheds on the concept of the church. This became particularly articulate in Sweden, as will be later described, and became the basis for the resistance to National Socialism in the 1930's in Germany.

The middle of the century finds the Lutherans in a situation entirely different from its beginning. The question, however, remains, Has Lutheranism as a whole been influenced by these changes? Or, if one is to be realistic in understanding Lutheranism as such, must those attitudes from Lutheranism's past still be considered important? This writer is convinced that they must be, and this study hopes to contribute to an understanding of how the church is actually viewed among the great majority of Lutherans.

(3) The third reason for this study is the need of the Lutheran churches themselves. Caught in the vast sociological changes which are still going apace, challenged by the ecumenical movement, confronted by ever new theological changes, and plagued by great areas of spiritual apathy within her borders, Lutheranism as a whole desperately needs to discover a common

concept of the church.

In Germany, the whole sociological structure of the nation has changed since World War II.¹ Class divisions have broken down, the image of the relation of the church to the public at large has shifted, the moving of 14,000,000 refugees into Western Germany has changed the structure of the territorial churches, the relation of church and state is posed in a way different from any period in German history, and the industrial revolution with its ensuing German prosperity forces the church to think again of its understanding of itself.

The American churches face a whole new situation as well. Formerly immigrant churches, isolated from each other and from American society as a whole, they are now coming of age, finding each other and assuming roles in the American culture that call for new evaluations of their nature and purpose.

Life changes more slowly in Scandinavia, but here the question must be asked whether the churches have ever understood what their most effective role could be. The National Churches of Scandinavia have lost their grip on their people and need the new life that can come from self-analysis and understanding.

The ecumenical movement, temporarily slowed by the impasse in the discussions on the church, is proceeding apace in other areas of doctrinal study which strike deep at the heart of the church. Current discussions in Christology will affect

¹Lutheran Churches of the World (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1957), pp. 13ff.

the Lutherans particularly because of the Christological orientation of their whole theological enterprise. The ongoing discussions with regard to the ministry, intercommunion, the theology of worship, eucharistic sacrifice, natural theology, and in other areas are all related vitally to the concept of the church. Can the Lutherans enter into these discussions with a position?

The theological world is alive with new questions and problems. The nature of theological language, the relation of historie and geschichte, the relation of essence and existence, the reassertion of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and other studies of this kind challenge the traditional viewpoint. Do Lutherans understand themselves well enough to be able to tangle with these impulses from the world of theological thought?

To speak intelligently of the spiritual life of vast areas of a church as diversified as the Lutheran is, as Ragnar Askmark of Sweden says, "a delicate matter." There is no real measuring stick of the soul of a people. Yet it is not using too exaggerated a phrase to suggest that the spiritual life of great areas of Lutheranism is appallingly bad. Askmark suggests somewhat timidly with regard to the Scandinavian people that "attendance at church does not belong to their customs," and admits that church attendance is the weakest element in Nordic Christianity.¹ In the case of the laboring people, staying away from worship is "almost a matter of principle."²

¹ Ibid., p. 107.

² Ibid.

In Germany, where the challenge of National Socialism found the German churches almost unbelievably weak, there has been what has been termed a renewal, yet leaders admit that the church is still bourgeois and that the intellectuals and professional people, on the one hand, and the laboring people, on the other, are outside of the church's influence.¹

The American churches are still more difficult to analyze since the general increase in interest in religion in the United States has been of benefit to the Lutherans as well as others, and the Lutheran churches have experienced an unprecedented growth until they have become the third largest Protestant group in the nation. American Christianity, however, has always been characterized by an excessive activism and a rather disconcerting lack of theological substance. American Lutheranism has as great a need for a re-examination of its understanding of the church as any section of Lutheranism.

¹Ibid., pp. 16ff.

PART I. ORIGINAL LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH

CHAPTER I

MARTIN LUTHER AND THE CHURCH

Though he was not, of course, the sole source of the evangelical faith and churchmanship of the modern world, he was its principal source; and in thinking of our Protestant heritage, we think primarily and rightly of him.¹

--an estimate from a follower of Calvin

Luther, the Man and his Works

Any attempt to understand Lutheranism, its genius or its problems, must begin with Martin Luther. This does not mean that the Lutheran Church of today is a mirror of the thought of the Professor from Wittenberg, nor that by scratching among the ruins of the sixteenth century one can understand this Protestant movement in the twentieth. In fact, the greatest problems usually lie where Luther's followers have departed from their master or have misunderstood him. Nor does it mean that Lutherans today unanimously fall at his feet. Some do fall, of course, if not at the feet of the real Luther, at least before a composite idol constructed from many caricatures. Luther, the theological genius, receives little attention at most Lutheran seminaries today. The Lutheran Confessions or a Biblical Theology often form the core of theological study, and Luther stands on a pedestal

¹John S. Whale, The Protestant Tradition (Cambridge: The University Press, 1955), p. 8.

at the library entrance or on a campus corner keeping a lonely vigil over the romantic past.¹

It is not necessary to begin with Luther because he as a man is the impeccable example for every good Lutheran. He himself was outraged by the idea of naming the Reformation movement after him. He considered himself, along with St. Paul, as the chief of sinners.² One cannot say that Lutheranism has not advanced from the Reformation, nor, in some cases, retreated from it. The Lutheran Church is not bound by Luther or to him.

However, the fact remains that we must begin with Luther. Luther is a symbol of Lutheranism. The Lutherans have produced no other comparable authoritative figure. There is no one, indeed, who matches in any way his influence. His personality, though sometimes faint and marred, is the dominant one in this Reformation heritage.

This immediately introduces a number of problems. The magnitude of Luther's writings overwhelms the researcher. Emperor Charles V couldn't believe that the documents presented to him at the Diet of Worms were the production of one man in

¹ See, for example, the catalog for 1956-57 of the largest Lutheran seminary in the United States, Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, p. 33. One course in Martin Luther is offered, an elective seminar for seniors and graduate students.

² Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p. 16. Dr. Pauck quotes Luther as saying, "My teaching is not my own, and I have not been crucified for the sake of anyone . . . why should it happen to me, miserable slinking bag of worms that I am, that the children of Christ should be called by my insignificant name? I am and will be nobody's Master."

a matter of months.¹ Yet Luther produced an average of one treatise every two weeks for more than twenty-five years. The Weimar Edition of his works, begun in 1833 and still incomplete, contains ninety-four volumes.

Not only does the great volume of the material itself present a problem, but the question of the authenticity of some of it must be raised. Dr. Gordon Rupp questions how grateful we should be to the "inferior Boswells" who took down virtually every word Luther uttered at his dinner table for years on end. These are recorded for us in the lively Table Talks.² What important scholar has his every aside, even those caused by indigestion, recorded for history! What scholar would want it!

This kind of personal material may have illuminated the thoughts of a careful and peaceful professor intent upon clarifying well-known and accepted concepts, but Luther was living in an explosive age. He invented language and enlarged and rediscovered concepts as he went along.³ One can never be certain, out of context, exactly in which way a word or phrase is to be understood. Even in context, it is often difficult. Furthermore, he did not have the kind of personality that was inclined to soothe troubled waters. He was incapable of being subtle. His thoughts came straight out,

¹Gordon Rupp, The Righteousness of God (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., pp. 81-101. See here an excellent discussion of the crises in vocabulary.

sometimes clear and brilliant, sometimes charged with such anger that not even the coarseness of the age could excuse him.¹ At other times he was kindness itself, warm and full of fun.

There is too the problem of the young and the old, or mature, Luther. After 1521 Luther was almost always in the midst of a crisis, and his life was lived in the aura of battle. Because of this, an analysis of his contributions after that date must be balanced between the heat of his struggle and his growing maturity. Before that time, as a monk and professor, he struggled with an intense personal religious problem, and his thoughts were more often brought forth out of a profound insight. During the decade here involved, it must be remembered that he had one foot still in the medieval Roman Catholic Church, and the implications of his thoughts were not yet clear even to him.²

To top all of this, the professor seemed to have no recognizable system. There is no complete dogmatics such as Calvin left the scholar. Because of the rush of circumstance and the varied requirements of a reformer of all of central

¹Ibid., p. 7.

²Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953). This problem is illuminated by the Introduction, pp. ix-xx. Prenter prefers the young Luther. Lowell Green, "The Young and Mature Luther," The Mature Luther (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1959), pp. 111-132, prefers the mature. It was the older Luther who governed Lutheranism until the exposure of the early Luther by Heinrich Boehmer in Der Junge Luther, published in English as The Road to the Reformation (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), and Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte (3 vols., 1st ed.; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1921-1928).

Europe, Luther led a helter-skelter life. This shows in his many works.¹

The task of delineating Luther's concept of the church would seem to be hopeless.

Yet such is not the case. The careful researcher soon discovers that despite the heat, the verbiage, and the rush, exciting and profound insights arise out of Luther like shining lights. His main concepts, his basic thoughts, are thoroughly grounded and clear. There is a coherent and consistent core that makes his theology a system. One can speak confidently of Luther's theology, indeed of his theological system.

Luther has not bequeathed to us an orderly survey, so to speak, of his entire theological terrain; yet if a profound insight into the nature and ways of God and a consistent ability to survey wide ranges of idea in the light of what he sees are any qualifications for a theologian, then Luther has no less claim to the title than Aquinas or Calvin, not to mention Melancthon. Only the indolent, who will not submit to the discipline of thinking his thoughts after him, or the prejudiced, who for reasons of their own do not approve of him will readily allow him to be dismissed as "no theologian" because he does not display what have been called "the second-rate virtues of the systematic mind."²

All of this is especially true of Luther's concept of the church. The confusion and the vacuum in Lutheranism on the nature of the church cannot be laid at Luther's door.

¹Rupp, op. cit., pp. 6-7, says it well. "In his preface to the Book of Exodus, Luther writes of Moses in a way which could apply to himself. 'Moses writes as the case demands, so that his book is a picture and illustration of government and life. For this is what happens when things are moving . . . now this work has to be done, and now that . . . and a man must be ready every hour for anything, and do the first thing that comes to hand. The books of Moses are mixed up in just this way.'"

²Philip Watson, Let God be God (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 27. This is Watson's conclusion to a brilliant discussion on the topic, "Luther as a Theologian."

The investigator is assisted by two facts. One is that Luther's categories and language are almost invariably Biblical. Here, as in other fundamental theological inquiries, he discovers his answers in the Scriptures. His concept of the church is a direct result of intensive Biblical research, and is not an invention of his own, mothered by some arbitrary necessity. Further assistance comes from the fact that the church was a fundamental concept for him. His understanding came simultaneously with his discovery of the gospel. It had once been assumed that the doctrine of the church was an afterthought with Luther and had come primarily as a result of his Leipzig disputation with Eck in 1521. Contemporary research has shown conclusively that Luther's understanding of the church came long before he himself understood its polemical implications. It came as early as his tower experience, about 1513, ten years before his first formal treatise on the church.¹ "... The church idea of the Reformation, the source of all later Protestantism, was already clearly developed in its essentials in Luther's first commentary on the Psalms."²

The Theology behind the Church

Luther was gripped by a sense of mission. He considered himself an instrument in God's hands sent to do a

¹ The classic treatise revealing this is that of Karl Holl, op. cit., Vol. I: Luther, "Die Entstehung von Luthers Kirchenbegriff" (1921), pp. 288-325. Herman Preus, The Communion of Saints (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1938), draws out the implications of this in well-documented detail.

² Pauck, op. cit., p. 26.

work. This does not mean that he began that way. He had no intention of being a reformer.¹ "I confess that I did not start all this intentionally, it all happened 'divine consilio' by God's decision."² Indeed, he confessed that he would have lacked the courage had he known what was ahead. "God has led me on as if I were a horse and he put blinders on me that I could not see who came running upon me."³

Because he conceived his task as a divine one, instigated and controlled by God, he claimed no authority for himself. He did not regard himself as being especially equipped. Essentially a modest man, he professed no leadership qualities, saying, "I do not like to rule. I do not have it in me."⁴ What he did, he did because he felt driven by forces greater than himself, forces which both compelled and upheld him.

The task for which he felt such a great compulsion was the preaching of the gospel. He had no dream of being a political agitator or an ecclesiastical organizer or a social reformer. "I have only preached, proclaimed and written God's Word. I have not done anything else."⁵ The fact that he was thrown into history's maelstrom grieved him. He was

¹Willem J. Kooiman, "Luther as He Saw Himself," The Mature Luther, op. cit., pp. 81ff. This is also discussed by Pauk, op. cit., pp. 15ff.

²Pauk, op. cit., p. 16.

³Kooiman, loc. cit., p. 82.

⁴Ibid., p. 85.

⁵Ibid., p. 84.

pursued and oppressed by what he called his Anfechtungen.

In periods of despondency, which came often in the critical days, he would ask himself, "Do you mean to say that all the previous teachers knew nothing? Do you regard all our Fathers as fools? Are you alone the nest egg of the Holy Ghost in these last times?"¹ When he felt this way he would put everything up to God. "I could say that I am right and wise and that others are wrong and so that I would have to win for that reason. But then I go into my cell, I pray and sigh without anybody knowing and throw the key at God's feet, saying, Good Lord, it is your business and not mine."²

This sense of mission evolved out of the basic conviction that governed his whole theological thought world and became the constitutive principles of his concept of the church. The first was the understanding of faith which grew out of his religious quest, and the second was the discovery of the reality of God in what he called the "word."

His experience of faith was the result of a long search. He abandoned his law career and entered the Augustinian monastery in 1505 to find a right relationship to God.³ He wanted to find a gracious God. It was not until about 1513 that he had the turn erlebnis in which he felt

¹Holl, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 382.

²Kooiman, loc. cit., p. 86.

³Watson, op. cit., pp. 15ff. Luther's biography in this period is especially well described by Boehmer, op. cit., and by Roland Bainton, Here I Stand (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950).

that he had found his answer.¹ It had been a hard struggle. Desperately applying himself to the discipline of the church, he found only a mounting anxiety. Throwing himself upon the power of the sacraments, especially that of penance, he still found no peace. He was never sure that he had done enough or confessed all his sins. His despair was deepened by the influence of the via moderna school of philosophy at his University of Erfurt. The nominalists taught the severe antinomy of man's complete freedom of will and the unqualified divine predestination of God. Luther read Augustine and the mystics. He tried the way of Bernard of Clairvaux. Some comfort came from his fellows and superiors. Staupitz, the Vicar General, helped the most and sent him to the Bible with the statement, "Christ is the forgiveness of real sin."² It was in the Bible that he found his answer, especially in the Epistle to the Romans and in the Psalms.

The first chapter of Romans said that the righteousness of God was revealed in the gospel as well as in the law. This idea caused Luther great despair for it seemed to make the gospel another law, a demand of fearful proportions from an unrelenting God. But in reading the Psalms he suddenly realized that this righteousness was different from that of

¹The exact time of this experience is sometimes disputed. See the discussion by Lowell Green, op. cit., pp. 113ff. Holl's work, op. cit., is primary here. Pauck says that it is irrefutable that Luther discovered the meaning of Romans 1:17 between his graduation to the doctorate on November 19, 1512, and his first writing of a commentary to Psalm 1 about July, 1513. "The Historiography of the German Reformation during the past Twenty Years," Church History (1940), p. 325.

²Watson, op. cit., p. 19.

the law. It was not a retributive righteousness by which God punished the rebellious, but a righteousness by which He made the sinner righteous. The key was Romans 1:17: "The righteous shall live by faith."

With this discovery came the realization of a qualitative gulf between the law and the gospel and a new understanding of faith. He saw that faith is simply acceptance of God's sovereignty and trust that God has acted in Christ to make the sinner acceptable to Him or, in Biblical language, righteous. A whole new world opened up for Luther with this insight. God was gracious after all. There was freedom to serve a God of love, and man was given the capacity to love a righteous God.

This faith was both a personal experience of decision and commitment, a spiritual act, and a work of God, done without either man's co-operation or initiative. It was a concept involving tension, a true antinomy as severe as any of the nominalists. However, this was true only in an intellectual sense. Faith gave religious peace. It was a miracle, a category outside of any ordinary criteria. Faith was not only an act of the greatest audacity which dared one to trust in God's grace, but it was also an event of the greatest humility, being simply one's response of trust to the mighty act of God in Christ.

The concept of faith was couched altogether in terms of divine revelation or, in Luther's terminology, the "word" of God. The "word" was a metaphorical expression used by Luther to mean the communication of the reality of God. God

was intensely real to Luther, more real than any other manifestation of reality. He was a creative, driving power which invades every nook and cranny of creation.

God is smaller than anything small, bigger than anything big, shorter than anything short, longer than anything long, broader than anything broad, slimmer than anything slim, and so on; he is an inexpressible being above and beyond all that one can name or think.¹

He is in every leaf, every flower, every storm and tide. He is incomprehensible and inscrutable, a hidden God, the Deus absconditus,² but also the revealed God who shows himself in ways that are encompassed in the concept "word."³

The profoundest meaning of the "word" is Christ. It is in Christ that God is supremely revealed and made comprehensible and accessible. Indeed He is impressed upon men with incredible intensity. In Christ God is made real to the sinner who is blinded to God's reality in creation. Borrowing St. John's use of logos in John 1, Luther made this the key to his understanding of revelation. "In the whole Scriptures, there is nothing else but Christ in either plain words or in-

¹Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation, p. 18.

²John Dillenberger, God Hidden and Revealed (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953) discusses Luther's Deus absconditus.

³Luther's doctrine of the "word" is the subject of much discussion and controversy. Good summaries are found in Watson, op. cit., Chapter V, p. 149, and Erich Seeberg, "Wort und Sakrament" in Luthers Theologie in ihren Grundzügen (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1950), p. 143. Other sources are: Ragnar Bring (ed.), En Bok Om Bibeln (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1948); Joseph Sittler, Jr., The Doctrine of the Word (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948); T. A. Kantonen, The Resurgence of the Gospel (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), especially Chapter III, p. 100.

volved words."¹ Even though there are obscure passages and much mystery, the content of the Bible as a whole is clear to Luther. It reveals God to us in the medium of Christ, either in the embryo of His coming in the Old Testament or in the child in the manger in the New Testament. "The Law and the Prophets are not rightly preached unless we find Christ wrapped in them."² The Scriptures "truly contain him . . . as swaddling clothes and a manger in which he was wrapped and laid."³

This "word" comes to man in two forms, law and gospel. They must never be confused. Indeed, a theologian is defined by Luther as one who can rightly distinguish between them. They are inseparable and mutually necessary. The law demands and the gospel gives. The gospel can only be understood in relation to the law. The law exposes the will of God. The gospel makes conformance to it possible. One is not ethics and the other religion, but both embody ethical and religious principles. The gospel is God's proper work for it reveals His grace, that is, His love for the sinner. It is through the work of the gospel that the sinner receives the righteousness which makes him acceptable to God. The heart of the gospel and, therefore, also of the "word," is the forgiveness of sin. The law, too, is a work of God's love. Indeed, all God does is done out of love. The righteousness which punishes, represented by the law, is never

¹Quoted by Watson, op. cit., p. 149.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

the whole work of God. It is crowned by the righteousness that justifies, the righteousness of the gospel.

The "word" has visible signs--"So that men admonished by the external sign and work or sacrament may most certainly believe that God is favorable and merciful."¹ The sacraments are the communication of the reality of God in another form. They are still the "word," the same "word," and only the "word." They are not acts of men and have no value whatsoever in their material form but are the work of God. God is present where the rite of baptism is performed. Christ is truly present where the Lord's Supper is celebrated.² Luther saw the sacraments as safeguards, from legalism and rationalism on the one hand, and from a spiritual understanding of Christianity on the other. He had to oppose Zwingli's theology at this point because Zwingli made the sacraments represent the presence of God and this to Luther endangered the whole doctrine of God.

The "word" is a completely objective phenomenon, with its historical content in the event of the Christ. This event becomes concrete in the Bible and is authoritative. It is indeed the only authority now available to men.

This does not mean that Luther was a fundamentalist in the contemporary use of that term. The Bible was authoritative because it revealed the reality of God in Christ, and

¹Quoted by Watson, op. cit., p. 160.

²The charge of consubstantiation can be made against certain Lutherans but not against Luther. See Seeberg, op. cit., p. 143, or Herman Sasse, This is My Body (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), pp. 101ff.

not the converse, that is, that it derives its authority from its own infallibility. The "word" of God is always infallible, for God does not lie. But the "word" of God is not to be equated with a book, although it comes, in one of its forms, through a book. Luther was in an embarrassing position on the problem of the inspiration of the Bible. He was adamant in his faith in the infallibility of the Bible. At the same time he was very free and easy in his use of the Bible. He was willing to throw out of the canon this or that book which had no apparent relation to Christ, and he often criticized the Biblical authors, even his beloved St. Paul.¹ He had no access, of course, to modern Biblical criticism. His understanding of the Bible, nevertheless, was not limited to its words and phrases or theological propositions. His concept was a dynamic one. The "word" to him was living.²

As completely objective as the "word" was to Luther, he also regarded it as intensely subjective. The "word" is the "word" because it speaks to us. The "word" is not only something given long ago in a series of historical acts. It is a dynamic, present process which gives continually. Through

¹Kantonen, op. cit., pp. 117ff., deals with this.

²The charge that Luther exchanged the external authority of the church for the Bible is well refuted in contemporary literature. See a discussion of this in Watson, op. cit., p. 173, and in J. K. S. Reid, The Authority of Scripture (New York: Harper and Bros., n. d.), pp. 57ff. Some Lutherans, of course, give ample evidence to such a charge as, for example, Martin Reu, Luther and the Scriptures (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1944). The bulk of recent research has shown Reu's interpretation to be one-sided. Luther did indeed appear often to be subject to this charge but, as we have tried to show, the total view of Luther gives a very different impression.

the preaching of the "word" and through the action of the sacraments, the reality of God is communicated now. Indeed it is in this way that faith is created. This is the work of the Spirit; this is God active now. What was once done historically "is always done spiritually in every Christian."¹

Luther's theology must be called theocentric, for its whole basis is the reality of God, the God who is the creator of the world and men. But this theocentricity must be Christologically interpreted. Christ is the key to the reality of God. At the same time, one must also say that his thought world was "pneumalogical."² The idea that the action of God takes place in the present through the action of the Spirit saturated Luther's whole approach to religion. One can say that Luther's view of the Christian religion is thoroughly Trinitarian.

These two poles of Luther's thought, personal faith and the "word" of God, were pinpointed in the cross. His was, he often said, a theologia crucis.³ The climax of God's act in Christ took place at the cross. The Christian's faith is nothing less than trust that the death of Christ was for him and his sins. This act made it possible for God to vindicate His justice and justify the sinner who accepted the offered

¹Quoted by Watson, op. cit., p. 167, from Luther's Commentary on Galatians.

²Prenter, op. cit. This is Prenter's main thesis.

³Watson, op. cit., pp. 102ff. Watson relates this centrality of the death of Christ to Luther's Christology, especially to the understanding of the incarnation held by Luther.

forgiveness.¹ The most important doctrine of Luther, the Rechtfertigungslehre, finds itself completely intertwined in the concepts of faith and the "word."

Communio Sanctorum

From the moment Luther understood these two principles of faith and the "word," he had a concept of the church. The relationship of the two principles is one of complete interdependence. Wherever the "word" is, there faith is also. It was impossible for Luther to conceive of the communication of the reality of God without the response of men, no matter how small that response might be. The "word" might not be purely preached and the response of faith might be very weak, yet wherever and whenever this event occurs, there is the church.² The "word"--that is, Christ--constitutes the church and this means that faith is necessary for the existence of the church. The church is the result of the activity of the "word" and the response of men. The church is an event, an occurrence within history. It comes into being as the effect of a cause. The "word" begets the church, and this means that where men believe in the "word," there the church is.

¹Luther's doctrine of the atonement is dealt with at length in Gustaf Aulen, Christus Victor (London: SPCK, 1931). Ragnar Bring supports Aulen's theory that Luther's conception closely resembles the patristic view that Christ's conflict with the powers of evil is the chief emphasis of the New Testament. Others disagree. See Watson, op. cit., p. 118. The critics claim that the penal theory or the subjective atonement is also present to a considerable degree in both Luther and the New Testament. Whichever may be correct, the centrality of the atonement in Luther's understanding of the "word" is undisputed.

²Watson, op. cit., p. 169.

The key word used to describe the nature of this result, the church, is community. For Luther the two expressions, Holy Christian church and communion of saints, in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, were identical. He believed that the latter phrase, communion of saints, was an addition to the creed, put there by the ancient church to clarify and explain the first phrase, Holy Christian church. The church is the communio sanctorum.¹ This communion of saints is the assembly of such people as are Christians and holy.² The church is God's people.³

Luther had difficulty with the word "church." He perceived wrong connotations in the German language. He discovered that the popular mind thought of either the church building or the church organization when the word Kirche was mentioned. Kirche in the German Bible is the translation of the Greek ekklesia, which means assembly or gathering. Luther maintained that this meaning would be retained better in German if the word ekklesia were translated Christian congregation or assembly (eine Christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung) or, best of all and most clearly, holy Christendom (eine heilige Christenheit). The Latin communio he preferred to be translated

¹One of the finest contributions of the present Luther research into this aspect of Luther's thought is Paul Althaus, Communio Sanctorum (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1929). The primary work was done by Karl Holl, op. cit., Vol. I: Luther, "Die Entstehung von Luthers Kirkenbegriff."

²Works of Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), Vol. V, p. 264.

³Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther's World of Thought, trans. Martin H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), p. 134. This is one of the more delightful excursions into Luther's thought.

Gemeinde, or congregation or community, rather than Gemeinschaft or fellowship or communion. Eine Gemeinde der heiligen, a congregation of saints, or eine heilige Gemeinde, a holy congregation or community, would be better, he said, than Gemeinschaft der heiligen, or communion of saints. He preferred above all else the term holy people and would have been satisfied to have the creed read, "I believe that there is a holy Christian people," and let it go at that.¹

Luther's dissatisfaction with the word Gemeinschaft was not caused by any disagreement with the idea of fellowship; indeed, it was exactly this idea that he sought to maintain. The church is a togetherness, a participation. Althaus maintains, and we believe rightly so, that the sixteenth century use of Gemeinschaft did not convey this meaning to Luther. He turned to other words to communicate this concept so alien to his hearers.² Nevertheless he sometimes used the word freely.

Luther tried to introduce to his followers the idea that the church is a brotherhood,

die göttliche, die himmlische, die alleredelste Bruderschaft, die Gemeinschaft aller heiligen, in welcher wir allesamt Brüder und Schwestern sein, so nah, dass nimmer mehr kein näher mag erdacht werden. Denn da ist ein Tauf, ein Christus, ein Sakrament, ein Speis, ein Evangelium, ein Glaub, ein Geist, ein geistlicher Körper und ein jeglicher des anderen Gliedmass. Kein ander Bruderschaft ist so tief und nah.³

¹ Book of Concord, trans. T. G. Tappert, J. Pelikan, R. H. Fischer, A. C. Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), pp. 357ff. Some of Luther's clearest thoughts concerning the church are elucidated in his Large Catechism.

² Althaus, op. cit., p. 38

³ From his Abendmahlssermon of 1519, quoted by Althaus, ibid., p. 54.

This idea, people of God, can be compared to the concept of a nation which has a "harmony of hearts found only among countrymen, felt most vividly when confronted by foreigners, a common type and a common history, a genuine spirit of brotherliness, a willingness to sacrifice for one another, a common pride, and a common love for something bigger and greater than they are."¹

The church can be called a solidarity of persons.² This solidarity, which includes Christ himself, is so important that every distinction of race, sex, social standing, and ecclesiastical dignity is obliterated. There is only one Christian estate even though there may be different offices. This solidarity finds its highest expression in the sacrament of the altar which is the climactic experience in the life of the people of God. "All the spiritual possessions of Christ and the saints are communicated to him who receives this Sacrament; again all his sufferings and sins are communicated to them and love engenders love and unites all."³

The spirit of this community is that of Christ. Luther was always ready to use the New Testament expression, "body of Christ." This was not for him the corpus christi mysticum which considers the presence of Christ to be the mystery of the sacrament, but it is simply the idea that all the believers are permeated with Christ's spirit. When we respond to the

¹Bornkamm, op. cit., p. 137.

²I have borrowed this phrase from Rupp, op. cit., p. 315.

³Luther, quoted by Rupp, op. cit., p. 314.

"word" in faith, we become one with Christ and one in each other so that Christ becomes all in all.¹

The church is, therefore, the priesthood of all believers. Luther did not mean by this phrase only the abolition of the middle man in the commerce between God and man, the priest, but more profoundly the responsibility of the Christian to his brother.² Every Christian is a priest to his fellow believer.

We are Priests which is a far greater thing than being Kings, for Priesthood makes us worthy to stand before God and pray for others. Christ has so operated on us that we are able spiritually to act and pray on behalf of one another, just as the Priest acts and prays on behalf of the people.³

It is clear that for Luther the priesthood of believers was a communal rather than an individualistic principle.

This idea of common responsibility did not, however, abrogate the necessity for a consecrated ministry. It destroyed the gulf between the layman and the priest, making the difference that of function and office.

Let everyone therefore who knows himself to be a Christian be assured of this, and apply it to himself that we are all Priests and there is no difference between us; that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and Sacraments. However, one may make use of this power only by the consent of the community or the call of a superior. For what is the common property of all no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he be called.⁴

¹Luther, quoted in Bornkamm, op. cit., p. 137.

²Althaus, op. cit., pp. 68ff.

³Luther, as quoted by Rupp, op. cit., p. 316.

⁴Ibid., p. 316.

The Problems

Even though this view of the church is theologically consistent and clear, problems are not absent. One of the most severe problems was that of the visibility or invisibility of this community.¹ Luther's battle against the institutional concept of medieval Catholicism forced him to insist often upon the spiritual aspect of the church's nature. But, even aside from this, Holl has shown that this emphasis belonged in Luther's earliest thoughts in his lectures on the Psalms, before the church conflict.²

Luther described the church as an object of faith, for ". . . as this rock (Christ) is invisible and only to be grasped by faith, so, too, the church (apart from sin) must be spiritual and invisible, to be grasped only by faith."³ The church is an article of faith--"I believe in the Holy Christian Church"--and is to be believed and not perceived. As evidence of this basic orientation of his thought, Luther often used the words, spiritual, inward, invisible, internal. He did not mean by this that the church was an abstract, spiritual idea and, therefore, lacking in reality. Reacting

¹This problem has received intensive study in current research, but not without some disagreement. See, for example: F. Kattenbusch, Die Doppelschichtigkeit in Luthers Kirchenbegriff (Gotha: Klotz, 1928); George Forell, The Reality of the Church as the Communion of Saints (Wenonah, New Jersey: By the author, 1943); and E. Rietschel, "Das Problem der unsichtbar--sichtbaren Kirche bei Luther," Schriften des Vereins fuer Reformationsgeschichte, CLIV (Leipzig: 1882 ff.), p. 28.

²Holl, loc. cit., pp. 296ff.

³Luther, as quoted by Rupp, op. cit., p. 317.

strongly to the accusation that his church was only a "cloud-land," a Platonic idea, he said, "When I have called the Church a spiritual assembly, you have insultingly taken me to mean that I would build a church as Plato builds a state that never was."¹

The church, though spiritual, being created by the "word" and true faith, was nevertheless real and visible. Parallel with the above mentioned phrases are those he used to describe the church as corporal, outward, visible, external. He enumerated the visible signs of the church on many occasions. His treatise, "Concerning the Councils and the Churches," in 1539 is explicit in its listing of the marks of the church which everyone can see.² There are at least seven marks: the preaching of the "word," the sacrament of baptism, the sacrament of the altar, the keys of Christian discipline and forgiveness, a called ministry, public assembly for worship, and the suffering of the Christian for his faith. Most important of all is the community itself, consisting of people of flesh and blood as real as any other impingement upon the five senses.

Luther struggled to maintain a dialectic tension between the two descriptions, visible and invisible. That which creates the church, the "word," is a completely invisible phenomenon in its power and source, yet it requires visible means of communication, such as the mouth, the lips, and the Bible. It always results in visible fruits, for from it come repentance,

¹ Ibid.

² Works of Luther, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 125.

love, service, dedication, and martyrdom, which are the marks of the Christian community. It is not these visible criteria which are the constitutive factors of the church. They are faith and the "word." At the same time, the invisible sources are never present without their visible counterparts. For Luther the visible and invisible aspects of the church are two sides of a coin. There is but one church. It has an internal and an external character, a body and a soul.¹ It is not helpful to think of these characteristics as primary and secondary or proper and improper or narrow and wide, as succeeding generations have done. This creates a false dichotomy. The visible and invisible natures of the church are descriptions of a single reality.

The church is neither a fairy tale nor an institution, but a community born out of the intervention of God in the world of men and manifest with the characteristics of God's work, that is, mind and body, created order and spiritual reality.

Although, as has just been stated, the church is not simply a sociological reality, it is also that, and the question of how it is to be related to the visible world must be raised. If its source of being is invisible, the church cannot be subject to visible powers alone. Yet in its visible-ness it is an institution in a society of institutions. For Luther the church had a tremendous responsibility to permeate and penetrate every thread of the fabric of human life. To him the visible form of the church must not circumscribe nor

¹See Pauck's discussion, op. cit., pp. 31ff.

limit in any way its invisible reality. Church order, therefore, becomes supremely important, not because it is itself determinative of the nature of the church, but precisely for the opposite reason, that the wrong order might be detrimental to the true church, that is, the two-fold, visible-invisible community.

The sociological structure of the church was so real to Luther that he insisted on making it one of the three orders of creation along with the family and the state. He did not, however, as some presume, seek to solidify the sociological structure of the church into a state church. The problem of creating a new church organization in Germany after his refutation of the canon law of the Roman Church was a staggering one. Caught in a tidal wave he had created and besieged by the anarchical pressures of what he called the Schwärmerei, Luther turned to the only stable structure he knew, the Christian princes, and sought their help in restoring order. There had to be order if the gospel were to be preached. The princes were Christian, indeed they were the very backbone of the Reformation. Could not these men, as well as any others, assume the responsibility of church leadership? He was careful to call them "Emergency Bishops."¹ The expediency of entrusting the church to the princes became permanent, and out of this arrangement grew the territorial churches of Germany and the close alliance with the state--a condition which was not basically changed until the twentieth century.

However inconsistent this structural relationship to the state may have been with Luther's concept of the church as

¹Bornkamm, op. cit., pp. 153ff.

a community of faith, it cannot be interpreted as a choice between a state and a free church, between a Volkskirche and a Gemeinde der Glaubigen. Luther might have acted more wisely and he could have exercised more organizational talent, but it is difficult to see what alternative he might have pursued at that particular moment in history.¹

It is clear, in any case, that the external character of the church, its organization and even its relation to the state, was not of supreme importance. The character of the church was determined by its internal needs and could vary from place to place and, of course, from time to time. To put Luther down as an exponent of any particular form of church order is to portray him as less flexible than he was.

The problems, however, did not end here. If one accepts these somewhat vague overtones, the questions remain, Where does the church begin and end? What is true and what is false? Who is a member and who is not? Luther was amazingly free at this point. He was always willing to believe that the church remained in the domain of his enemy, the Pope, despite the many harsh words he directed towards Rome. God's Spirit blows where it wills. The doors are wide when one tries to define where the church is. One cannot always be sure where God has true believers. There are no absolute boundaries visible to the eye. The church is catholic in its very nature. The church is general, in Luther's words.² The Holy Christian

¹Rupp, op. cit., p. 324.

²See Pauck's discussion again, loc. cit., pp. 31ff.

church is one and its unity is created by the gospel and is an essential part of its internal character. Since Christ creates the church through His words, the church cannot be divided and man cannot arbitrarily set any limits.

The church also is local and specific. It embraces not only all Christian people on earth, but it is at the same time the local worshipping community. But even here, close scrutiny does not necessarily reveal the distinction between what is true and false. One cannot take a census of the church.¹ Only God knows His own. The signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper cannot unequivocally mark a man a Christian. These signs only reveal that a community is present, and not that a particular individual qualifies. Thus the communal nature of the church is again emphasized. The fact that there may be tares among the wheat does not destroy the wheatfield. It is not the number, and certainly not a majority count, that defines the presence of the church, but rather the "word." One can conclude that Luther's view was as open and as ecumenical as any in the history of Christendom.

At the same time Luther insisted upon pure doctrine as the rule by which the church must live. Within his flexibility, there crouched a dogmatism as severe as that of any of his later followers. He insisted on creedal uniformity. He was unrelenting with the other parties who disagreed with him. Although he could with honesty search for ways to mend the fences of the fragments of the Reformation, and could yield on important

¹Bornkamm, op. cit., p. 147.

points if he chose, he could also resort to a literalistic Biblicism when the solution to a particularly pressing problem seemed to demand it.¹ Driven back and forth by many pressures, he felt constrained in this or that practical instance to make arbitrary decisions which belied his fundamental understanding. Luther did not and perhaps could not see the inherent contradiction of his position, and did not foresee the problems it would create for the centuries to come when his followers in more logical fashion felt it necessary to choose between an ecumenical and a rigidly dogmatic view of the church's boundaries. He could not conceive of denominations. He thought only in terms of a uniform religious and social community.² Having divested himself of the rigidity of Roman Catholic institutionalism, and having restored the dynamic view of the New Testament, Luther had difficulty in carrying this concept out to its logical conclusion in the problems of the relation of churches to churches and the church to the state.

The last word, however, must be left with the spiritual and dynamic pole of Luther's thought. The church was to him always in process. It is Kirche im Werden.³ It is in pursuit of a goal. Nothing guarantees that it is the church. It lives by faith. Every arrogant claim to perfection, whether it be in a doctrinal formulation or in exemplary life, or in ecclesi-

¹Sometimes what seemed to be pure stubbornness of this kind was, in reality, only a tool to emphasize a more profound concept than the tool itself indicated. Such was the case at the Marburg colloquy. For a resume of this see Sasse, op. cit., pp. 187-294.

²This is Pauck's conclusion. Op. cit., p. 38.

³Bornkamm, op. cit., p. 151.

astical glory, must be set aside in deference to the overwhelming power of the "word," which no man possesses or controls. No external characteristics are the concluding evidences.

The church, for Luther, is the community of those whom God has called through His "word," and who, having responded in faith, live by love and strive toward a goal beyond realization in the now.

This is a broad and sweeping concept of the church. It is one which is integral to the whole of theology, one whose form, despite its illusive simplicity, has not always been grasped in its beauty and power by the great following of Martin Luther.

Luther and Lutheranism

Luther's contemporaries understood him as a man with a mission. This was in agreement with Luther's estimate of himself. The first sketches of his life and career by his friends breathe a special warmth for the Wundermann.¹ He was the "miracle among men" to Melancthon, "the angel of God" to Bugenhagen, "the superlative powerful interpreter of the Word" to Jonas, the "blessed instrument and chosen weapon of God" to Mathesius.²

¹Rupp, op. cit., p. 15.

²Ernst W. Zeeden, The Legacy of Luther (London: Hollis and Cotter, 1954), pp. 10ff. Although Roman Catholic in its bias, this survey of Luther in the history of German Lutheranism is well documented. It was originally published under the title Martin Luther und die Reformation im Urteil des deutschen Luthertums (2 vols.; Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1950). Vol. I, The Legacy . . ., was slightly abridged and translated with

Luther's mission to them was a purely religious one, to re-establish the gospel as clearly and purely as it was in the beginning, with the preaching of honest repentance, confession, and the forgiveness of sins. In this role, he was called upon to be positive for he was to restore this pure doctrine, as well as negative, since he was also to destroy the eternal foe of Christ, Satan, in the ranks of the Papacy. "In his day, Elias assaulted and overthrew idolatry, and Martin Luther fell upon the powerful idol of papal indulgence and hurled it to the ground. Elias killed the priests of Baal, and Luther the man of God overthrew the Mass priests and their idol with the sword of the divine word."¹

Melanchthon's instinctive cry to the students at Wittenberg, upon hearing of Luther's death, was typical: "Alas, gone is the horseman and the chariots of Israel."²

Luther was a prophet of God to those who knew him best, but still, only a prophet. Succeeding generations were to enhance this view of the Wittenberg Professor without keeping the complex and warm personality. "He was mentioned to

the author's hearty approval. Another excellent study in this area is Horst Stephan, Luther in den Wandlungen seiner Kirche (2nd ed.; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1951). Stephan deals with the image of Luther from the Reformation period to his time of writing. Andrew J. Drummond, German Protestantism since Luther (London: The Epworth Press, 1951) is more general in nature and contains an admitted Reformed bias. Ernst Wolf has also written on this subject in "Luthers Erbe?", Evangelische Theologie (August, 1946), pp. 82-115, (November, 1946), pp. 310-312.

¹ Zeeden, op. cit., p. 12, the tribute of another contemporary, Coelius.

² Ibid., p. 10.

vanish again, the effect he produced was superhuman."¹ With the second generation came the rise of the first Luther myth.

It would be expected that with the passing of those who knew Luther personally, the emphasis would shift from the man to his work. This transition was hastened and hardened by the tragedy which befell this stage of Lutheranism. The young movement was split by serious controversy before Luther's bones were cold in the grave. The acrimony continued for nearly thirty-five years until a settlement was effected by the Formula of Concord in 1577.

Luther had left no Joshua to guide his fledgling movement. Philipp Melanchthon, upon whom the reformer's mantle fell, was too scholarly and gentle to carry on in his master's style. His deep irenic spirit and humanist tendencies began to show without Luther's firm hand, and this angered the more belligerent and party-minded Lutherans. Three theological parties lay claim to the true Luther. The followers of the peace-minded Melanchthon were called Philippists or Melancthonians or, with less complimentary words, Intermists, Synergists and Crypto-Calvinists. They stood for compromise approaches to the Calvinists, especially on the matter of the Lord's Supper. They were inclined to coexist with the Roman Catholics and be at peace with the existing government. Melanchthon had written another version of his classic Augsburg Confession in which the article on the Eucharist was modified

¹The story of the battles of the new Lutheran movement is told in detail in Theodore E. Schmauck, The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1911), pp. 587ff.

to make it more palatable to the Swiss. This became the scorned Variata to the age of orthodoxy which followed. The Melancthonians had an interest, too, in the problem of free will, and were willing to permit a greater latitude for man in co-operation with God in man's salvation. Victorin Strigel became the main spokesman for this point of view. The University of Wittenberg, Luther's own Faculty, and the University of Leipzig became the leaders for this party.

The die-hard enemies of the Philippists were the Gnesio-Lutherans, a party represented by such men as Amsdorf, Flacius, and Musaeus. Their headquarters were at the Universities of Magdeburg and Jena. Rabidly opposed to any kind of church relationship outside of the Lutheran fold and rigidly committed to a line of reine Lehre, they became the chief antagonists and bearers of strife in the era of adjustment to the loss of Luther.

The third party, inevitably, was a mediating one called the Center Party. They had no conspicuous part in the battles but took over the ruins after the fray. This party included such prominent men as Brenz, Andrae, and Chemnitz. Chemnitz was the leader and became the first major theologian of the Lutheran orthodoxy.

No less than seven major issues split the church in this period.¹ Of interest to us is that none of the controversies was concerned directly with the nature of the church. The doctrine of the church was lost in the fray. Indirectly,

¹Book of Concord (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), pp. 102-256.

the consequences of the debates were to catapult Lutheranism into a mould in which the church was defined in terms of pure doctrine, a mould which showed no cracks for a hundred fifty years and one from which Lutheranism has never fully escaped.

Although the Center Party was the apparent victor of the struggle and the extreme positions of the Gnesio-Lutherans were condemned, it was clearly a complete defeat for the Philippists. The Center Party was not in the center. It was to the right of center, and committed Lutheranism to a dogmatic understanding of the Christian faith.

All three parties were agreed on their estimate of Luther. He was regarded as nearly a god rather than a man. His every word was deemed in perfect consistency with the "word" of God. "It crossed no one's mind to criticize Luther, he was with his doctrine set on a pedestal and worshipped in holiness and in the mystery of God."¹ Expressions such as "the grace of God through Luther" and the "act of benevolence to Germany from God,"² were used. Luther was showered with names such as godly knight, a martyr, a Jacob, Samson, Moses, a John and Paul. He was the fifth Evangelist as well as the angel of the Lord.³ The gregarious, passionate, and human Luther became the symbol of pure doctrine and his doctrine became dogma, all in the period from his death in 1546 and the peace of 1580.

It was in this fashion that he was viewed throughout

¹Zeeden, op. cit., p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Ibid.

the seventeenth century, the age of orthodoxy. Luther's doctrine was considered the "orthodoxia," the true Christian doctrine necessary to salvation. Faith in this doctrine was considered the true link to Luther. There was no particular interest in the Reformation as an historical event. "Luther was not studied but believed in."¹ A new coin struck in 1617 as a memorial of the centennial of the nailing of the Theses to the Castle Church in Wittenberg read:

Gottes Wort ist Luthers Lehr
darum vergeht sie nimmer mehr.²

This meant simply that Luther was not known or understood in terms of life and historical circumstance but through his teaching as interpreted through the eyeglasses of orthodoxy. This meant a narrow footing and coincided exactly with the Lutheran Confessions as compiled in the Book of Concord. This contained The Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Small and Large Catechisms, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, and the Formula of Concord. To be sure, Luther himself was the author of the Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles, but these were interpreted in the light of the years of controversy. Luther's spirit was not permitted to shine through them.

Lutheranism had become within its first century a tradition based not so much on the religious genius of its founder as on a caricature of him which had been created through the controversies and historical circumstances of the half century

¹Zeeden, op. cit., p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 37.

following his death. Luther, the man, had become Luther, the myth.

This does not mean that this was not a profoundly religious and devout tradition. It was in most respects the finest of Luther. It preserved the tradition of justification by faith, but it failed to capture and hold the best of Luther's dynamic of the church.

The mood began to change toward the end of the seventeenth century. Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf's (1626-92) momentous work Historia Lutheranismi of 1692 brought sound historical methods into its study of Luther. Seckendorf was deeply convinced of the truth of orthodoxy, but he saw no reason to worship Luther.

We do not exalt him above other men, and in my book I have never pretended to defend all his words and deeds without distinction. It would have been an injustice to his "manes", if I may call it so, if I had played the part of the flatterer and not that of a sincere and truthful writer of history.¹

He felt that by presenting Luther as a man he might better preserve his zeal and therefore his best influence.

This "loving human touch"² stressed in Luther became the great theme of the next century and opened the floodgates. Since that time Luther has been treated with an astonishing contrariety.

Philip Spener (1635-1700), the father of Pietism, saw in Luther the individualist the great man who brought religion down from the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Pope to the heart

¹Ibid., p. 58.

²Ibid., p. 63.

of the individual Christian. Luther was the faithful witness to the truth of the Bible. "I must admit I do not understand our excessive adulation of Luther, practically making an idol of him"¹ He saw orthodoxy as being a restraint of conscience, exactly that from which Luther had freed them. "If this same Luther were to rise up today he would not recognize his followers as disciples for they often apply themselves quietly to reinstate in the Church certain principles which he most heartily contested with the Papists."² The Bible was the authority for the Pietists and not Luther. He was beloved by them but not worshipped.

Johann G. Walch (1692-1775) can be called the transition from the traditions of orthodoxy and Pietism to the momentous age of the Enlightenment. Neither a Pietist nor a strict orthodoxist, yet accepting Luther's teaching as truth, Walch edited his works and wrote ten volumes about the controversies in and out of the Lutheran Church.³ He approached history pragmatically, presenting a picture of Luther in a natural, human way for perhaps the first time since Luther's contemporaries. This was the end of the Luther myth to those who wished to avail themselves of it. Luther was great and sublime as a scholar, orator, pious and bravely stalwart man of God. But he was a man quite different from the supernatural one of the time past.

Pietism and the rationalism of the Enlightenment broke

¹Ibid., p. 110.

²Ibid., p. 113.

³Ibid.

the myth of orthodoxy. It was soon replaced with another. The Enlightenment took the human Luther and made of him the author of intellectual freedom whose contributions on the religious scene were little worth remembering. For Lessing (1729-1781) Luther brought the light of pure reason back to civilization. Luther was the architect of freedom, not a prophet of God.¹ Similarly, Frederick the Great, who had no time for Luther's "blustering," saw Luther as the one who freed the Fatherland and made Germany an independent nation.² Again and again the eighteenth century said it--"He brought freedom from outward restraint, freedom of thought and conscience."³ The emphasis was upon his powerful personality, his manhood, his power and feeling. The natural bouyancy of his way of life, his spirit as opposed to his doctrine, his dynamic personality as opposed to his works, became the theme.

To Herder (1744-1803) Luther was the "teacher of the German nation . . . the herald and precursor of the enlightenment."⁴ As such he was pictured as the "whirlwind" who had prepared the way for the new understanding in philosophy. The right to think freely and to hold independent ideas was described as his hallmark. "The uninhibited use of reason was an outcome of Luther's fight against the church."⁵

¹ Rupp, op. cit., p. 17.

² Zeeden, op. cit., pp. 151ff.

³ Ibid., pp. 161ff.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 169ff.

⁵ Ibid.

The myth of Luther's supernaturalness and authority in orthodoxy turned into the myth of his superhumanity and individualism of the Enlightenment. The Reformation became a revolution and this revolution was a "midwife" to humanity, a humanity freed from any bonds and "thrown back on its own devices was to transform the world into a peaceful cosmos merely by bringing to full expansion its own noble powers."¹ And Luther was its symbol.

The tumultuous nineteenth century saw cross currents of the preceeding two hundred years. The tercentenary of the Reformation in 1817 brought new interest in Luther. The Erlangen Edition of his works began in 1826. The Luther Jubilee of 1833 launched a definitive library of his writings known as the Weimar Edition. The orthodox view which had been almost smothered by the succession of Pietism and rationalism re-awakened. It revived in two forms commonly called the theology of repristination and the Erlangen school. Both appealed to Luther once more as an authority in theological matters, although with much less awe than their predecessors of the seventeenth century. The exposure of the human Luther had had its effect. The repristination school sought to restore the treasures of the Reformation by reviving the theological method and views of orthodoxy. Important leaders were such men as Theodor Kliefoth (1810-1895), Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872), August Vilmar (1800-1868), and W. E. Hengstenberg (1802-1869). Vilmar expressed the view that "theology must know that she had

¹Ibid., p. 163.

nothing new to say, nothing new to discover . . ."¹ Unlike its orthodox fathers, this movement was interested in the doctrine of the church, the first special interest since Luther. But contrary to the golden age to which it looked back, it felt constrained to criticize Luther on occasion.²

In contrast to the effort simply to restore the seventeenth century view, the Erlangen emphasis sought to synthesize the Lutheran heritage and the new learning. The motto was "eine alte Weise, neue Wahrheit zu lehren."³ This was the first genuine effort to distinguish between Reformation and post-Reformation theologies. It tried to see Luther and the Confessions in their own historical circumstances and not simply through the eyes of the old dogmaticians. Here Luther found true friends and at the same time, honest ones, who tried to be objective and realistic. They had great interest also in the nature of the church. The leader was J. C. K. von Hofmann (1810-1877), professor at Erlangen University. The movement spread beyond Erlangen, however. It centered around such men as Adolf von Harless (1806-1879), F. H. B. von Frank (1827-1894), and Theodosius Harnack (1817-1891). Harnack was the author of a two-volume work called

¹J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), Vol. II, p. 129. Neve gives a detailed review of Lutheran movements in the nineteenth century. Reinhold Seeberg does so in Paa Taerskelen til det 20de Aarhundrede (Kristiania: Steen'ske Boktrykkeri, 1902). Fagerberg, Bekendtnis, Kirche und Amt (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1952), traces the influences of repristination theology while Drummond, op. cit., gives a more general picture of the Protestant situation.

²Ibid., p. 130.

³Neve, op. cit., p. 131.

Luthers Theologie issued in 1862 and 1886. The modern Luther renaissance found a forerunner here.¹

Alongside this revival of Reformation studies, another movement called the mediating theology,² or sometimes the Biblicists, sought to accommodate themselves to the times more drastically than did the Erlangen theologians. They revised the Apostles' Creed and virtually rejected the other Ecumenical Creeds. The Variata version of the Augsburg Confession was preferred, and the Formula of Concord rejected. Despite these departures from the Lutheran heritage, they had a great interest in Luther. He was interpreted chiefly through the ideas of Melancthon. Julius Koestlin (1826-1902) authored a Luthers Theologie in 1862 and a biography, Martin Luther, sein Leben und seine Schrift, in 1875. Luther's polemical spirit was toned down, especially his uncompromising position on the Lord's Supper. It was these theologians who supported the Union Church in Germany, especially the Prussian Union of 1817.

This third view was the predominant one at the close of the century. The confessional revival had little influence after 1870. Luther's place in history was defined by a true spokesman of the conclusion of the nineteenth century, Ernst Troelstch, when he said that the break between the medieval and modern world came with the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century and not with either the Renaissance or the

¹ Ibid., p. 138.

² Ibid., pp. 142ff.

Reformation in the sixteenth century.

It remained for the twentieth century to bring to light a perspective of Luther that had significance for the whole Lutheran movement. Only one thing was really clear at this stage. Luther was of such stature that every age had to reckon with him.

CHAPTER II

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS AND THE CHURCH

Whoever has once felt a gentle breath of the bracing mountain air which is wafted from this mighty mountain of faith no longer seeks to pit against its firm and quiet dignity his own uncertain immature and wavering thoughts nor to direct the vain and childish puff of his mouth against that breath of God in order to give a different direction.¹

--one Lutheran's appraisal of the Augsburg Confession

Lutheranism and its Confessions

If Luther may be regarded as the human symbol of Lutheranism, it is because of the power of his ideas and his personality and the important role he plays in history. He has never been officially adopted by a Lutheran church as its official spokesman or theologian as, for example, has Thomas Aquinas in Roman Catholicism. The official symbols of Lutheranism are its Confessions. The body of literature usually referred to as the Lutheran Confessions is bound together in a book called the Concordia or the Book of Concord,² and con-

¹Vilmar, a nineteenth century confessionalist, as cited in Concordia Triglotta (Minneapolis: The Mott Press, 1955), p. 23.

²Whenever the English is quoted in this study, it will be taken from the latest translation, Book of Concord, trans. T. G. Tappert, et al., op. cit. When a choice between the German and Latin translation is necessary, the German will be quoted, since it is usually considered more authoritative. However, if there is any substantial difference in the two, this will be noted.

tains six separate documents¹ which were written over a period of forty-six years, from 1529 to 1577, and brought together in this single volume in 1580.

The Small and Large Catechisms written by Luther in 1529 make up the first documents. These are the chief pedagogical instruments of world Lutheranism and are the basis for all instruction of both children and adults. They are in the strictest sense not confessions, but are useful summaries of the general Lutheran position. Children usually memorize the Small Catechism in preparation for their confirmation at about the age thirteen. The Large Catechism, written for adults, is more expository in nature than the brief Small Catechism with its short definitions. The Augsburg Confession, sometimes called the Augustana, was written in 1530, chiefly by Philipp Melancthon but in collaboration with others and with the approval of Luther, in preparation for the defense of the Lutheran party at the Diet of Augsburg. It is the chief confessional document of Lutheranism, not only because it is universally accepted² but because of its superior quality. The

¹The Book of Concord also usually contains the three Ecumenical Creeds. They are universally accepted by Lutherans and for convenience are included, although they are not, of course, Lutheran Confessions as such.

²The only Lutheran body today not accepting the Augustana as a binding Confession is the Protestant Batak Church in Indonesia (Huria Kristen Batak Protestant) which, instead of adopting the Augustana in order to satisfy requirements for affiliating with the Lutheran World Federation following World War II, wrote a new confession which was accepted as an alternative. The Batak Church, thoroughly familiar with the Small Catechism of Luther, had not found it necessary in its rather peculiar history as a mission church to establish any formal relationship with the Augustana, although it had no objection to it. The new confessions and other documents

Apology of the Augustana, prepared by Melanchthon alone in 1531 as an answer to the Confutation of the Augustana by the Roman Catholic party, is of much greater length and is inferior in both its style and clarity. The Smalcald Articles were written by Luther in 1537 and illustrate the dynamic quality of the man better than do the Catechisms. Considered superior in both its insight and clarity to any of the other documents by this writer, with the possible exception of the Augustana itself, it has been the most neglected of the Confessions. The sixth confession included is the Formula of Concord, written in 1577 by a group of men in an effort to secure peace in the German lands among the Lutherans after their long controversies, already outlined in Chapter I.¹

A far more dogmatic document than any of the others and framed in the language and approach of Lutheran scholas-

relative to this unique episode in Lutheran history are in the archives of the National Lutheran Council, 50 Madison Avenue, New York, New York.

¹The history of the formation of these confessions is recorded in great detail in a number of competent books. Among these are: Concordia Triglotta, op. cit., pp. 15ff; James W. Richard, The Confessional History of the Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1909); Theodore E. Schmauk, The Confessional Principle and The Confessions of the Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1911); Charles P. Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and its Theology (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1871). As will be noted later, these histories are written from different points of view. The ardent confessionalists naturally were more interested in writing such histories than those with less interest in the Confessions. Of the foregoing, Richard takes the more critical view, representing the viewpoint generally attributed to the Pietists, although he is very fond of what he calls the Old Confessions, that is, the Catechisms, the Augustana, and the Smalcald Articles. The others here listed are generally of the view referred to as repristination theology.

ticism, the Formula has been a battleground for Lutherans since it was produced. Its first purpose, that of securing an end to the controversies of its time, was generally achieved although it is charged by some that subscription to it in the German lands was obtained "diplomatically and not by proper and ecclesiastical methods."¹ Some princes, according to Richard, threatened to banish from the country everyone who did not subscribe.² About two-thirds of the estates of the Augsburg Confession in Germany subscribed and the rest refused.³ The Formula became the dogmatic basis of the age of orthodoxy and its chief confessional document. It gave rise to new controversies, the two dominant ones being that fostered by Calixtus at the University of Helmstedt and the Kenoticist controversy centering at the University of Giessen.⁴

In due course, the Formula became the dividing line between the new conservative Lutherans and the more ecumenically-minded Lutherans. Used as a test of the soundness of Lutheran doctrine, it forced some Lutherans to desert their movement and join the Calvinists.⁵

¹ Richard, op. cit., p. 492.

² Krauth suggests that this is too harsh an interpretation of the events, and that whatever truth there may be in the heavy-handedness of the princes was necessitated by the urgency of the times. Krauth, op. cit., pp. 325-328. This is, of course, an admission that, whatever the reason, the charge is true.

³ Richard, op. cit., p. 492.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 507ff.

⁵ Krauth, op. cit., pp. 325ff., admits that this is true, but does not find fault with the Formula on this account, feeling that the Formula did not raise the issues but simply

The debate in Lutheranism as to relation of the Formula to the Augustana, the basic confession, has never been settled. The King of Denmark refused to permit the Formula to be introduced into Denmark. The Scandinavian churches, in general, followed this example and rejected it, and to this day subscribe only to the Augustana and the Catechisms.¹ This pattern was followed in the American churches, with the German background Lutherans generally accepting the whole Book of Concord and the Scandinavian-Americans only the so-called Old Confessions.²

These divergent attitudes toward the Formula of Concord are expressed in two major works on the Lutheran Confessions published early in this century by two Americans at neighboring theological seminaries. James W. Richard, professor at the seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, takes the

made plain the situation. The "Crypto-Calvinists" would have left in any case, in his view, and besides, it was good riddance! The result, he feels, was peace in the church, for everyone finally found where he belonged and the lines were drawn clearly which, to Krauth, was what was necessary.

¹Richard, *op. cit.*, pp. 597ff. The Norwegian Church accepted only the Small Catechism. The Church of Sweden is in a somewhat more ambiguous position. The Council of Uppsala of 1593 pledged itself only to the three Symbols (that is, the Ecumenical Creeds) and the unaltered Augsburg Confession. The church law of 1686 accepted the whole Book of Concord, but the Constitution of 1809 mentions only the Council of Uppsala and the Augsburg Confession. A. T. Jorgensen (ed.), Lutheran Churches of the World (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1929), p. 39, asserts that both Sweden and Finland adhere to the whole Book of Concord.

²Curious patterns resulted from this, however. The Evangelical Lutheran Church (formerly the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America) followed the Norwegian tradition, but the Lutheran Hymnary (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934) assures its readers that this in no wise means that this church rejects the other Confessions.

position that the Formula of Concord is essentially a divisive document and does not accurately portray the theological position of the Augustana, and therefore cannot be included in the body of Lutheran Confessions.¹ For him, the true Lutheran position is represented by the movement of Pietism which he interprets as a correction of the age of orthodoxy and a return to the original position of Luther and the Augustana. Theodore E. Schmauck, writing from the seminary in Philadelphia, on the other hand, regards the Formula of Concord as the explication of the Augustana and, further, a necessary one. It can and must be accepted by all who truly accept the Augustana for the Augustana "did not suffice to maintain the pure doctrine even in the early and golden period of Protestantism."² The Formula is a spiritual, vital, historical and confessional necessity, "necessary to uphold the truth of God's Word."³

Attitudes Toward the Confessions

Beyond the divisions in Lutheranism over which are the Confessions, there is the more fundamental question of attitudes to those Confessions which are accepted. The variances here are only exceeded by the contrariety of attitudes toward Luther.

The age of orthodoxy believed that revelation divides itself into single propositions called articles of faith. "An article of faith is a part of the doctrine, revealed in the

¹ Richard, op. cit., pp. 491-545.

² Schmauck, op. cit., p. 693.

³ Ibid., p. 710.

written Word of God, concerning God and divine things, proposed to the sinner to be believed in order for his salvation."¹ These articles, assembled by the church, form the sum of what the Christian is to believe and are included in the Symbols, the Confessions. It was clear to the orthodoxists that the Confessions were a simple summary of the true religion and as such completely necessary and authoritative for both the church as a whole and the individual Christian. As such, they were also the means whereby the "Orthodox could be distinguished from the heterodox."² No question was raised among these teachers regarding the authority of the Confessions. The basic question for them was the relation of the Confessions to the Bible.

Some divines toyed with an idea of inspiration of the Confessions similar to that they held for the Scriptures.³ More sober minds prevailed, however, and suggested a special theory they labeled "mediate illumination." Hollaz explains that the Confessions differ from the Bible in that, while the Bible was communicated by immediate inspiration from God "to holy men of God led by the Holy Spirit, the Symbolical Books are sacred writings, composed by orthodox men, divinely endowed with the privilege of mediate illumination (in a strict sense

¹ Heinrich Schmid, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs, The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (4th ed. rev.; Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1899). This is a very competent compendium of seventeenth century theology. This quotation is from David Hollaz (1646-1713) as cited on p. 92.

² Abraham Calovius (1612-1686) as quoted by Schmid, p. 100.

³ Schmid, op. cit., p. 99.

no symbol of the church can be called inspired).¹ Mediate illumination was further explained to mean that although the orthodox writers conceived the Confessions and committed them to writing by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, they did not write by a "special, extraordinary, and immediate inspiration of God, but were endowed and instructed by God through an ordinary and mediate illumination."²

The Pietists relaxed this attitude somewhat in the succeeding age, although they held in great measure to the theology of the Confessions. Their attitude as a whole was simply that the substance of the Confessions should be defended as being correct and true, not on the basis of any independent source of authority, but because it was in agreement with the Bible. The Confessions could not be called infallible, they said, "because no writing other than the Bible ought to be called such and because many secondary matters in the Confessions can be called into question and indeed have been proved erroneous."³ Even with this somewhat different attitude, the Pietists were not especially interested in closely supervising the clergy. They considered the church at large to be bound to the Confessions but did not feel that it was necessary because of this to examine each pastor on each particular of the Confessions. John Albert Bengel (1687-1752) attributed to the Confessions a

¹ Ibid., p. 100.

² Ibid., p. 101.

³ Richard, op. cit., p. 555. A quotation from John George Walch (1693-1775) considered a mediator between the orthodox and Pietists.

somewhat negative role. "The purpose of subscription is not, indeed, that we wish to bind the servants of the Church to every particular contained in them, as, for example, to every exegetical explanation, but we thereby only testify that we do not approve any of the heresies which they reject."¹ It was his advice to pastors to subscribe cheerfully and then to conduct their ministry according to their conscience.² This, he claimed, was the attitude of Luther who forced no one and was always glad to hear new interpretations and new ways of expressing doctrine.

These two attitudes are well illustrated by the later popular formulas of subscription known as the quia and the quatenus, the former expressing the attitude of the orthodoxists in subscribing to the Confessions because they are in accord with the Word of God, and the latter suggesting the Pietists' view in subscribing insofar as they represented the view of the Bible. There were numerous attempts to bridge the gap here implied. Bishop Martensen of Denmark suggested, "Quia et Quatenus cum sacra scriptura consentiunt," meaning by this that the quia indicated the essential oneness of the Confessions with the Biblical doctrines, while the quatenus kept clear the relative difference between the ecclesiastical and the individual, between the letter and the spirit of the Symbols.³

No single formula of subscription was ever adopted in

¹Ibid., p. 557.

²Ibid.

³Richard, op. cit., p. 599.

Lutheranism, and even in the German states among the orthodox the formulae varied widely.¹

The nineteenth century witnessed the multiplication of attitudes. Five main interpretations emerged from the melee of rationalism and romanticism compounded with the earlier heritage of orthodoxy and Pietism. The orthodox attitude survived and had a revival about the middle of the century. The Pietist attitude grew stronger also, although it gave birth to several new attitudes.² A third school called for the abandonment of the Confessions altogether. The Confessions were viewed only as historical documents of a past age. The Bible was considered the only document to which a Lutheran could be bound.³ A fourth school advocated, not the abandonment of the Confessions, but their revision. S. S. Schmucker, a leading ecumenical Lutheran in Philadelphia, proposed that the first twenty-one articles of the Augsburg Confession be kept, arguing that the rest of the Augustana belonged to that particular part of history in which it was written. However, even in regard to these articles of doctrine, Schmucker believed that no minister should be bound to every sentiment therein but only

¹Ibid., pp. 591ff. Samples of the various formulae are given.

²T. G. Tappert, "The Symbols of the Church," What Lutherans Are Thinking, ed. E. G. Fendt (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1947), p. 343. Dr. Tappert gives examples of American church leaders who held the varying views.

³As an example, the constitution of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania of 1792 contained no allusion to any Lutheran symbolical book. The ordination oath required only that the candidate "preach the Word of God in its purity according to the law and the gospel." Richard, op. cit., p. 603.

to the "fundamental doctrines."¹

A fifth view, which developed out of the Erlangen school, was destined to play a prominent role in the twentieth century. This view stressed the authority of the Confessions as over against Schmucker and the Biblicists, and advocated what was called the "historical position." The Confessions were interpreted historically and practically rather than dogmatically. They were treated as correct expositions of the Bible but were to be interpreted in light of the peculiar circumstances in which and for which they were written. If this freedom of interpretation were fully understood, the manner of subscription mattered little and the quia subscription was acceptable as long as no particular interpretation of it was mandatory. The freedom was implied, also, to permit additional light to fall upon both the Bible and the Confessions from later times. ". . . It is contrary to the whole of the church to say that the time of symbolical formulation has terminated in the year 1580."² In this view the Confessions become the identity of Lutheranism, real symbols of its history and consciousness. They do not, however, stand between the church and the Bible. They are not norms which obligate the individual but rather acts of confession which become a witness to the environment from which the Lutheran emanates and in which he makes his own confession. In such a milieu the individual can challenge the Confessions, argue with them,

¹Tappert, "The Symbols of the Church," op. cit., p. 346.

²Ibid., p. 348.

and in so doing learn from them. In this learning process he is driven deeper into the meaning of the Bible and is better able to make his own confession.

The Historical Character of the Confessions

Whatever attitudes there may be toward the Confessions, their historical character cannot be denied. Each of the Confessions was occasioned by a particular need and event in history. Each of them was written in order to meet a need or react to an event. The language, the choice of material, the attitudes, the citations from the Fathers, the Scripture chosen for proof, the exegesis of the Scripture used--all were historically conditioned by the people to whom the document was directed, the goal the document hoped to serve, the author or authors by whom it was written. With the possible exception of the Formula of Concord, none of the Confessions was written with any further purpose than that of meeting the particular need to which it was addressed. Even in the case of the Formula and, perhaps, more so in its case, the confessional document was shaped by the particular controversies of the particular time. This is true, in spite of the fact that it assumes the air of a conclusive and final statement of the truth to a much greater extent than any of the other Confessions.

The Confessions themselves admit this historical conditioning and even emphasize it in their prefaces. The various compilations of the documents include the prefaces to the documents themselves in each case and are part of the official

Confession. These prefaces explain, sometimes in great detail, the circumstances under which the Confessions were written. They include information on the people to whom they are addressed, the signers of the document, the dates and places involved. In this sense they are very different from the Ecumenical Creeds which allude to no historical conditioning. Perhaps even more striking is the attitude of the Confessions themselves which frankly seek to speak to the heresies, the problems, and the challenges of men and movements which are named by proper names.¹

It is this historical character of the Confessions which makes them what they are. They are acts of confession by people at particular times and places. They are real responses, real confessions of the faith made in times of crisis. Without the historical setting they would not be Confessions, but rather systems of theology, or simply dogmatic statements or timeless creeds.

There are, however, unlovely aspects to this historical character. Although these aspects serve to make certain that no illusions concerning the "time conditioning" of the Confessions are possible, at the same time they serve as an embarrassment to Lutheranism.

There are, for example, in the Confessions patent errors

¹It is, strangely enough, the Formula which speaks of itself as a "symbol of our time," and goes on to say that symbols are "merely witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood in the church of God by contemporaries with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned." Book of Concord, trans. T. G. Tappert, et al., op. cit., p. 475.

of fact.¹ There is an appendix to the Smalcald Articles entitled "Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope, Compiled by the Theologians Assembled in Smalcald in the Year 1537," which is false, since it was written by Melancthon alone.² An etymology on the word "mass" is proposed, tracing it to a Hebrew origin in order to reduce to ashes the ridiculous etymology of the Catholic party.³ The difficulty is that the etymology of the Apology is as ridiculous and as false as that of the opponents. A reference to Revelation 12 in the Smalcald Articles should be Revelation 10,⁴ Jerome is misquoted by Luther in the same document,⁵ and a serious scientific illustration is proposed in the Formula to the effect that garlic juice when smeared on a magnet impedes its natural power!⁶

Quite aside from these incidentals, which can be attributed to lapses of memory, the scientific knowledge of the age, and other such understandable shortcomings, there are confusing statements of a more serious nature which are doctrinal in their implications. The Latin text of the Smalcald Articles reads "the pure, holy, and ever virgin

¹The writer is indebted to Dr. T. G. Tappert for his collating of the various examples. Tappert, "The Symbols of the Church" op. cit., pp. 355ff.

²Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 319.

³Ibid., p. 265.

⁴Ibid., p. 299.

⁵Ibid., p. 300.

⁶Ibid., p. 468.

Mary."¹ The Augsburg Confession, without any qualification, declares flatly that baptism is necessary to salvation, a doctrine contrary to the universal Lutheran position which accepts the description "ordinary" as a qualifying phrase.² The zealousness of the Augustana against the Anabaptists understandably occasioned this slip. Betraying Melancthon's own prejudice, the Apology gives an unconditional endorsement of Aristotle's Ethics, saying that "Aristotle wrote so well on natural ethics that nothing further needs to be added."³ This would be considered by every informed Lutheran as a bald denial of the Lutheran understanding of the ethical motive and is certainly contrary to the spirit of Luther. The Apology also refers to "Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution, the sacrament of Repentance, as truly sacraments," although the sacraments are viewed differently elsewhere in the Confessions.⁴ Melancthon later in the Apology alludes to ordination as a sacrament, which is in express disagreement with the general Lutheran understanding.⁵

Of much less importance, but an even more vivid illustration of the historical character of the Confessions, is the unhappy use of some of the coarser language of the six-

¹Tappert, "The Symbols of the Church," op. cit., p. 357. Tappert rightly suggests that this is most likely the insertion of a customary medieval ascription by force of habit. Whatever his attitude to the Confessions, no Lutheran is considered bound by this error.

²Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 33.

³Ibid., p. 109.

⁴Ibid., p. 211.

⁵Ibid., p. 212.

teenth century. This is, of course, of little consequence unless one attempts to make the Confessions completely applicable to the contemporary scene. Imagine the Holy Spirit calling the opponents of the Augustana "rude asses," "godless sycophants," "windbags," and "louts and scrimps."¹ These may have been true, but they need not become a permanent part of a confession of faith! Even some of their own evangelical pastors were called "shameful gluttons and servants of their own bellies who ought more properly to be swineherds and dogtenders than curates of souls and pastors."² Because of this, they deserve to be "chased out with the dogs and pelted with dung."³ This is hardly endearing language for the faithful, indeed hardly Christian in the eyes of twentieth century piety.

The Augsburg Confession

The conclusion is that the Augsburg Confession is the basic Confession of Lutheranism. Whatever may be the attitude to the Formula of Concord, it is the Augustana that is fundamental. And since the Augustana defines the church for Lutheranism, while the Formula does not concern itself with the nature of the church, we shall turn to this "mighty mountain of faith."

¹Tappert, "The Symbols of the Church," op. cit., pp. 355-356.

²Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 360.

³Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 359. Perhaps, as Luther also here suggests, this is all we "can expect of crazy Germans." Perhaps so, however, this does not cast a favorable light upon their good judgment on weightier matters, unless one understands it strictly in the historical context.

The Augustana is a remarkable document. Irenic in tone, which was an accomplishment in those hectic and bitter days, it is a clear, concise, and very readable summary of the Lutheran position. A Preface is most courteously addressed to the Emperor who appeared at the Diet where the Confession was presented as the defense of the Lutherans. The main body contains twenty-eight articles which are divided into two main sections. The first twenty-one are limited to a paragraph or two and define succinctly the chief doctrines. The last seven deal at much greater length with the abuses of medieval Catholicism in ecclesiastical customs and the reasons for the Lutheran correction. The document is signed by eight German princes and the two free cities who supported Luther. The Emperor received both a German and a Latin text, of which the German was considered the original. Both copies are now lost. The extant texts differ in minor points as to sentence structure and sequence and occasionally in the use of an important word. The differences are not deliberate nor substantial. English translations are usually made from both languages and often printed side by side in the Book of Concord.

Two principles clearly underline the Confession. First, the writers wanted it clearly understood that they had no intention of deviating from the traditions of the Christian church; second, they made the Bible the basis of authority.

Let us examine the first principle. "Our churches dissent in no Article of the faith from the church catholic," says the Augustana.¹ The confessors believed that they were

¹Ibid., p. 48.

in perfect accord with the historical church and that the church had erred only in its latter centuries through the incorporation of certain abuses, both in practice and in doctrine, which now should be eradicated. They referred to such abuses in practical matters as the celibacy of priests, the Mass, one kind in the sacrament, etc. Their chief concern in doctrine was the way of salvation, that is, justification by faith, which in itself was directly related to the nature of the church.

The Augustana accepted the Ecumenical Creeds and condemned the same heresies which these ancients condemned. The first three articles, "Of God," "Of Original Sin," and "Of the Son of God," were the accepted doctrines of the day and were not under controversy. The Confession is, therefore, basically not a protest, but a positive statement of various doctrines and a policy statement on practical problems. In its approach to this task, the Augustana adopts a posture of traditionalism and universalism.¹

The Augustana demonstrates the continued loyalty of its signers to the Catholic tradition despite their defection from the Pope in Rome.² The content of this tradition is

¹This is so apparent that Schleiermacher complains that "there were less than adequate grounds for uncritically incorporating into the new confession of faith all the traditional doctrinal definitions and all the terminology of centuries long since past." Cited by Jaroslav Pelikan, "Tradition in Confessional Lutheranism," Lutheran World, Vol. III (December, 1956), p. 214. ²

The primary purpose of the Diet of Augsburg was ostensibly to "deliberate concerning matters pertaining to the Turk, that traditional foe of ours and of the Christian religion, and how with continuing help he might effectively be resisted." Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 24.

principally the dogma of the Trinity. This tradition they saw as a symbol of the existing unity and a means for restoring the lost unity. "The desire," said the Preface to the Emperor, "was also expressed for deliberation on what might be done about the dissension concerning our holy faith and the Christian religion and to this end it was proposed to employ all diligence amicably and charitably to hear, understand, and weigh the judgments, opinions, and beliefs of the several parties among us, to unite the same in agreement on one Christian truth, to put aside whatever may not have been rightly interpreted or treated by either side, to have all of us embrace and adhere to a single, true religion and live together in unity and in one fellowship and church, even as we are all enlisted under one Christ."¹

There were, behind these irenic words, however, also political motives which cannot be ignored. From a political standpoint, the Augustana is the defense offered to the Emperor by the protesting German princes and free cities of the validity of their right to reform the churches within their own jurisdiction. The Empire, as well as the Roman Church, had charged that with their defection from the Pope the evangelical princes and estates had also lost their right to rule, for the law required that all rulers accept the apostolica disciplina of the Trinitarian tradition of the ancient church.²

¹ Ibid., p. 25.

² Pelikan, "Tradition in Confessional Lutheranism," Lutheran World, op. cit., p. 215, states that defection constituted not merely heresy but sedition, and the rulers were therefore subject to deposition.

An overemphasis upon this political element would be a mistake, however, for the princes demonstrated that they were wholly committed to the religious aspect by signing the document even in face of a threat of violence.

The picture that the confessors seek to create has several facets. On the one hand they try to interpret the conflict as difficulties between two parties in a single church, rather than contentions between churches. They still clung to the vision of one religion in one state and tried desperately to forestall any suggestion of two churches within their jurisdictions. One way to do this was to assert vigorously that they had no affinity with any of the heresies condemned by the tradition. On the other hand, they sought to show that if the charge of right and wrong were made, it was the Roman position that was a betrayal of the tradition. The Augustana disassociated itself from the Manichaeian heresy and the Pelagians, from Donatism and the Anabaptists, and agreed with the condemnation of these heresies. Having refused to be identified with those heretical movements of both the past and present, and thus firmly identifying themselves with the proper tradition, they proceeded to drive a wedge between Rome and the tradition. The result was conservatism in the Augustana in both form and content.¹

Having established this view in the first three arti-

¹ Pelikan, "Tradition in Confessional Lutheranism," Lutheran World, op. cit., p. 217, quotes Edward Gibbon as saying in The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire that the modern observer "will rather be surprised at the timidity than scandalized by the freedom of our first Reformers."

cles, the way is prepared for Article IV on Justification, the heart of the Confession.

The second principle governing the Augustana is its appeal to the Bible for authority.¹ "We have introduced nothing either in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Holy Scripture or the universal Christian church."² No references are made to the Church Councils or to the Papacy regarding sources of authority. Tradition is the main appeal but in each particular case, this is interpreted to mean in agreement with the Bible. Doctrinal positions are buttressed by references to the Bible even though these are only occasional and are chosen prudently. This principle is dominant even though it is not made explicit. The Confession does not contain an article defining its understanding of the Bible,³ either the mode of inspiration or the limitation of the canon.⁴ The Augustana was able, subtly but effectively, to establish two apologetic points: first, it secured adherence to the tradition which was evidence of its unity with the historical church; second, it established complete reliance upon the Bible, thus fashioning a weapon to use against the heretical traditionalism of the Roman party.

¹Krauth, op. cit., pp. 266ff.

²Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 95.

³The Formula of Concord begins by saying, "We believe, teach and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged." Ibid., p. 464.

⁴In theory, then, the canon is still open for the Lutherans.

Article IV on Justification is by far the most important statement of the whole Confession. Later, in the nineteenth century, it was generally called the Material Principle, and is described in the Lutheran tradition as the "article upon which the Church stands or falls" (articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae). The Article reads:

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.

The simplicity of this doctrine is stark. Man is made acceptable to God, that is, just before Him, without making any contribution himself, for Christ's sake (propter Christum), through faith (per fidem), when he believes that God does accept him and that his sins are actually forgiven for the sake of Christ, who made it possible through His death. This faith itself becomes righteousness before God. God imputes this faith as righteousness.

The basis for this view is the doctrine of total depravity, which is the belief that man is incapable of pleasing God by any merit of his own. Salvation is therefore completely dependent upon God's grace and any participation of man in the salvation process is repudiated. Neither is there any preparation in this grace as in the Roman Catholic se praeeparare ad gratiam.

¹Ibid., p. 30.

The character of this faith is primarily fiducia, the confidence that this is the meaning of God's grace, as distinguished from the Roman Catholic notion of faith as assent (cum assensu cogitare). Intellectual content is not denied, but it is not made central or primary.

In this transaction between God and man, the receiver of faith remains a sinner. Righteousness is imputed (imputatio justitiae), which is to be distinguished from the notion of being made righteous. "God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness." Justification is equated with forgiveness. In typical Lutheran preaching and teaching the words forgiveness and justification are used interchangeably.

In pre-Reformation theology, several ways of interpreting the righteousness of God and its relation to the act of justification were prevalent. They actually ranged from strong moralistic views that virtually equated justification with moral renewal to nude imputations which were so ultra-forensic as to be theoretically possible apart from Christ. Article IV takes its stand squarely in the middle of this range, rejecting, on the one hand, any hint of moralism and, on the other, any doctrine that was not based upon the mediation of Christ. It is to this situation that Melanchthon speaks in his long discussion of the Article in the Apology.¹ This is the masterful section of that controversial document, and the interpretation is penetrating in its expose of the vacillations of the current medieval ideas. It is the clarity and simplicity of this position that became the saving feature of the whole Augustana

¹ Ibid., pp. 107-168.

and the chief characteristic of Lutheranism, despite its many varying developments in the following centuries.¹

The Concept of the Church in the Augustana

The church is not discussed until Articles VII and VIII after statements on the Ministry in Article V and on Obedience in Article VI. Before dealing with these articles in some detail, it is necessary to understand how the concept of the church is dealt with in more indirect ways in the rest of the Confession. The obvious conclusion is that the use of church elsewhere in the Augustana is not uniform and is not theologically clear. Theological, historical, and ecclesiastical usages merge into one another. This would be natural at a time when all the issues were not yet carefully defined and where a common vocabulary of terms was not current. As to what extent this also reveals a lack of clarity in the minds of the confessors is more difficult to ascertain.

Approximately sixty references are made to the church, depending upon which words are included as having direct bear-

¹I make this suggestion despite the fact that the ensuing controversies centered about this very point and the bulk of the Formula is concerned with keeping the middle road here established, and despite the charge of J. A. Dorner, History of Protestant Theology (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), pp. 155-164, that orthodoxy did, in effect, turn the Formal Principle, that of the basic authority of Scripture, into the Material Principle, and in so doing ripped justification out of its proper context and, as he expresses it, "gradually postponed justification in the process of salvation." While I am inclined to admit that this is true, it must also be fairly admitted that the outlines of the justification by faith principle were maintained as the most characteristic feature of Lutheranism. The classic treatment of this problem is Karl Holl, Die Rechtfertigungslehre im Licht der Geschichte des Protestantismus (2nd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1922). Holl agrees with Dorner.

ing upon the church.¹ The church is referred to as Christendom five times. It is called in Latin ecclesia and in the German Christenheit in these instances. These references, all in Article XXVIII, carry no theological import and simply refer to the historical church of that particular day.

Universal Christian church is another phrase used. In German it is rendered christliche Kirche and in Latin ecclesia catholica. This cannot be considered a precise term. It is apparent in the Introduction to the articles on abuses that the church referred to is in opposition to Rome. This would seem to make it a divided church. In another instance in Article XXVIII a broader idea seems to be meant, making the universal church the church of the centuries, the commonly accepted church, not necessarily historically unified and yet the church of history in which the traditions are generally known and accepted.²

The references used by the writers in describing themselves are no clearer. They say, in various contexts, "They teach," or "Our churches," or "with us." These self-designations occur in both the German and Latin versions. They may refer to the Lutheran congregations. If so, this is not altogether certain. It is possible that they mean the church bodies, or organized churches under the princes. Many organizational patterns were already found among the Lutherans. This is perhaps the most likely interpretation, although it is not a

¹Hans Asmussen, Warum noch Lutherische Kirche? (Stuttgart: Evangelische Verlagswerk, 1949), pp. 122ff. Dr. Asmussen agrees with this count.

²Book of Concord, op. cit., pp. 81ff.

compelling one.¹

Only once is church interpreted as congregatio outside of Articles VII and VIII. This occurs in Article XXVIII and is rendered Versammlung in the German. The church building is referred to as both Kirche and Templum in the German text as well as grosse Kirche which appears as ecclēia in the Latin.

The confessors in each of these instances are giving expression to a vision of the church which is a concrete historical entity and yet one which has unclear boundaries. It is not a divided church, for their devotion to unity seems unshaken, yet the concept borders on the edge of denominationalism, which, so familiar to later centuries, was only beginning to have any kind of impact upon them. It seems fair to draw the conclusion from this evidence that the church to them was neither institutional nor invisible. It was neither frozen by history, nor overcome by history. There was a dynamic understanding of the church, theologically unclear as this understanding seemed to be. The church was a continuity, an historical phenomenon; it was in the state of becoming, as it always had been.

In dealing with the church in any substantial way, we must turn to Articles VII and VIII. They read, with their titles, as follows:

Article VII: The Church

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according

¹This is Asmussen's choice. Asmussen, op. cit., p. 109.

to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4,5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Article VIII. What the Church Is

Again, although the Christian church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even open sinners remain among the godly, the sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men, for as Christ himself indicated, "The Pharisees sit on Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2).

Accordingly the Donatists and all others who hold contrary views are condemned.¹

First to be noted is that the definition of the church in both articles is incidental to the purpose of the article. In the German text of Article VII, the definition is actually a relative clause, the whole sentence reading, "Es wird auch gelehrt das allezeit müsse eine heilige christliche Kirche sein und bleibin, welche ist die Versammlung aller Gläubigen, bei welchen das Evangelium rein gepredigt und die heiligen Sakramente laut des Evangelii gerecht werden."²

The subject of Article VII is clearly the unity of the church and is not directly concerned with a definition of the church or with a doctrine of the nature of the church.³ This

¹ Book of Concord, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

² Concordia Triglotta, op. cit., p. 46.

³ Ernst Kinder, "Basic Considerations With Reference to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession," The Unity of the Church (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1958), p. 59. Dr. Kinder suggests the title "On the True Unity of the Church."

does not make the definition any less valid, but reflects the attitude as regards the purpose of the Confession as a whole and the general feeling of the Confession concerning the importance of the church.

Article VIII, although entitled "What the Church Is," is similarly misnamed for it, too, is not directly concerned with what the church is, but rather with the problem of hypocrites within the church and the efficacy of the sacraments when given by evil men. Melancthon himself admits this when, in commenting upon the Article VIII in the Apology, he says, "That was why we added the eighth article, to avoid the impression that we separate evil men and hypocrites from the outward fellowship of the church or deny efficacy to the sacraments which evil men or hypocrites administer."¹

It can be concluded that the Augustana does not consider the nature of the church to be of first importance. There are several qualifying factors to this statement. All the doctrinal statements up to this point have been short, as, for example, the most important one on justification, and it can be argued that the confessors simply sought to keep the definition brief and to the point. If this is true, it seems to this writer to have been a miscalculation. Articles I through III, although of the most fundamental importance, could afford to be brief for they simply asserted the commitment of the Reformation to the main stream of the history of doctrine. Article IV is concise, but could afford to be, since it puts the doctrine of justification in the center of impor-

¹ Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 168.

tance and relates it organically to the foregoing doctrines. The case is different with the church. Because it is placed after almost incidental articles on the Ministry and New Obedience, its importance is seemingly further reduced though, in fact, the gulf between the Lutheran and the Catholic parties on this point was enormous, and the confessors understood this.

On the other side, one may argue that the church was considered to be of first importance, so much so that it is assumed, and therefore only this indirect reference to it is necessary. This is a strange approach, but one which finds some support in the treatment which the doctrine of the Word receives. This doctrine garners even less attention in the Confession, yet in the minds of the confessors must have been of the gravest importance. If this is true, then it must still be accounted an error of judgment or a compromise with the political purposes of the Diet of Augsburg. The lack of attention to the doctrine of the Word has caused Lutheranism endless wrangles. A broad definition might have saved the subsequent history of Lutheranism some of its bitterest battles and some of its worst blunders.¹

This cannot be assumed to be the final answer, however, for since the church does have a definition² and since the ob-

¹It is very doubtful that the scholastic period which followed so swiftly on the heels of Luther's death could have gone so far in its exploitation of the Formal Principle if the Augustana had preserved some clear reference to Luther's dynamic understanding of the Word.

²Melanchthon does consider this a definition in the Apology although, again, he considers the reason for the def-

lique references to the church reveal, as has been seen, a certain lack of clearness and attention to careful language, the conclusion that the Augustana does not have the same feeling of importance for the church that Luther had seems to be inescapable.¹

A second attitude to be noted is that the Articles are more concerned as to where the church is than to what it is. The church is where the gospel is preached and the sacraments rightly administered. The church is where there are true believers. The church is there, in spite of hypocrites and evil men. What is or what is not a sign of the presence of the church is of first concern. The only exact and direct attempt to say what the church is comes in the two phrases, "This is the assembly of all believers," in Article VII and "The Christian Church is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints" in Article VIII. As explicit as these may at first seem to be, more careful examination shows that they are there only as a means toward explaining another end. In the first case, it is to say that the church is the body of believers "among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel." It is really the last part of the sentence which

initiation to be that of saving the Church from "the infinite dangers that threaten the church with ruin." Book of Concord, op. cit., pp. 169-170.

¹The argument that Luther approved the Augustana and agreed fully with its language and spirit does not suffice, for Luther consented somewhat grudgingly to it, even pointing out some of its weaknesses. In any case, Luther did not consider the Augustana to be his final word to history. In fact, Luther's own theological development continued after 1530, the date of the Augustana.

is intended to be emphasized for the next sentence goes on to say that "It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word." It is the unity of the church which needs to be proved. The question of whether or not the church existed in the German lands after their defection from the Pope is the question, not the question of what that church was in its essence. If preaching and the sacraments are the marks that determine the presence of the church, then the church was in the lands of the Protestant princes, and it was, indeed, the historical, universal church. What that church actually was, or of what it consisted, or what was its final determinative character is not the question directly asked or answered.

That something similar occurs in the second case in Article VIII is even more clear. The sentence begins, "Again, although the Christian church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because . . ." and it is clear that the aim of the sentence is directed toward the conclusion regarding the presence of hypocrites and open sinners. The question is the "where" of the church and not its "what."

Speculations as to the reason for this kind of emphasis, or lack of it, upon the nature of the church are several. One could surmise that the writers may have assumed that the church is such a simple entity that its nature can be adequately defined in such a passing fashion, while the more

profound problems, such as unity and the presence of hypocrites, merited a more detailed and careful attention. The opposite can also be said, that the confessors found the doctrine of the church so difficult to define in any exact way that they simply used phrases acceptable among themselves and assumed that doing anything more would be neither necessary nor possible.

A third speculation fits the facts more easily. The concern of the Confession at that point in history was not to define the church in any exact terminology. Their problem was, in a sense, more difficult and more important. They had to demonstrate that the true church did indeed exist among them and that this church, of which they were representatives, was the church of the ages, the one which always existed and which would continue forever. This was the hand out to Rome, for it tacitly admits that the church is not the claim of any man, of any organization or institution, but that it is where the gospel and the sacraments are, regardless of the type or the form of its external life. The church was also in the Roman camp. A narrower or a more exhaustive definition, that is, a more carefully defined dogmatic statement, would have served no useful purpose in that moment of history. The definition presented was brief, simple, and clear, with broad enough lines to capture varying points of view, all of which would be acceptable within the Biblical concept of the people of God. The principle of including rather than excluding, the very principle that makes the Augustana a remarkably ecumenical Confession, gave to it the freedom of movement which could prove in history extremely dangerous if the Confession were to be held as

an irrevocably controlling document.

The confessors that summer at Augsburg did not know that they were controlling the views of the church for centuries. They were writing a document to show the Emperor, whom they deemed their friend (their attitude toward him cooled somewhat later), that they were reasonable Christian men who held certain convictions which they thought to be acceptable within the life of the church of God.

The attitude of the Augustana toward the nature of the church is, therefore, not to be interpreted as a criticism of that document. Rather, it is a criticism of the Lutheran movement which attempted to turn the particular needs of that moment into the proper mood for the whole life of the church and thus freeze the whole Lutheran attitude into one either of complete neglect of the doctrine of the church or of strange scholastic formulations which were crowded into the ideas expressed in the Augustana.

With these attitudes and conditions confronting us, what kind of concept can we say the Augustana has?

First, the church is Christologically oriented. The church is so integral to the whole Confession that it can and indeed must be treated only after its Christology and the relation of the individual to the saving work of Christ has been defined. This occurred, of course, in Article IV on Justification. Even though Christ does not appear to be the center of Articles VII and VIII, He is the underlying motif of every idea there. The church can be called an assembly of saints and true believers, because the reader already knows

what a saint and true believer is. He is one who has been justified, received into favor and forgiven for Christ's sake alone. He is one who has righteousness because of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. He is a man of faith, faith in the deeds which Christ has done for him.

When Article VII calls the church "one," it means that its unity comes from its head, Christ, who cannot be divided. When it calls the church holy, it means that the holiness of Christ, which has now become part of each Christian, makes the church holy. When it says that the church will continue forever, it confesses that this can happen only because of Christ's continuance, not because of any inherent immortality existing in the church itself. Whatever the church is in its essence, it is inextricably bound up in the mystery of the atonement and the relation of Christ to man.

Second, the church is defined in terms of faith. Article V on the Ministry begins, "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel."¹ The justification that comes from Christ comes through faith. It is out of the relationship of these two concepts, the activity of the Christ through the gospel and the reception by the individual in faith that the church is born. To make this more explicit, Article VI on the New Obedience admits that "such faith should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good

¹Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 31.

works as God has commanded, but we should do them for God's sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ . . .¹ Faith is the foundation stone of the Christian life; it is the ground out of which the fruits of the life grow. The Augustana insists that to be a Christian is to speak first of faith and then of its works. The church, inevitably, must be thought of in the same terms.

Third, that entity which comes about as a result of the action and response of the gospel and faith is a community. The church is not understood sociologically or institutionally, but in terms of God working among men through the means of the gospel and sacraments, through the office of the ministry, creating a living fellowship. The German use of the word Versammlung should not be interpreted as meaning that the church exists only at the moment of gathering together. The church is the Christians, the people, whether they are dispersed or together. The type of community is not amply described, except in terms of its relation to Christ, that is, in terms of its faith in Him.

That which makes possible the presence of Christ and which creates the community and therefore is indispensable, and all that is indispensable, is the means of grace, that is, the gospel and the sacraments.² The right teaching of the

¹ Ibid.

² The German text says preaching and the Latin, teaching. There was no thought of a difference here. Good preaching is teaching in the sense of the Augustana. Teaching should not be thought of in connection with a classroom but rather with the pulpit.

gospel, that is, the teaching of gospel according to the Biblical canon, which is the only authority for these writers, and the right administration of the sacraments, that is, according to the institution of Christ, are the constitutive elements of the church. They are the objective powers which make possible faith and thus bring into being the community of people who are righteous before God in Christ.¹ The presence of Christ is defined in terms of the presence of the gospel and the sacraments.

The church is to be recognized in history by the Word, that is, the gospel and the sacraments. These are the criteria whereby it can be ascertained that this community exists. The question of churches or church thus becomes nearly irrelevant. There is but one church. It manifests itself under many forms. Its hiddenness comes to the fore when these two criteria appear. Fellowship consists essentially in proclamation and sacramental fellowship.²

The unity of the church becomes historically apparent when men agree as to what gospel is to be proclaimed. The satis est consentire of Article VII is of paramount importance to this concept. The gospel and the sacrament cannot simply be present "somehow." A mutually recognized and acknowledged consensus of what the gospel is, is necessary for a full and historical unity. It is at this point that the Lutheran concept of the church takes on its confessional character. If the

¹Kinder, op. cit., p. 65.

²Ibid., p. 68.

Bible is to be the norm and the authority, if the church is not simply a mystical and invisible entity, then it is possible and necessary that these constitutive elements of the church, the gospel and the sacraments, have a form and a content agreeable to those of the fellowship. The source of the dynamic of the church may be the invisible Christ, but it certainly has for the Augustana a most concrete form and a tangible reality. Only the Word and the sacraments can be called the notae ecclesiae of the church but the Confession is the conditio sine qua non for the fruitful course of the gospel through these means.¹

The Augustana does not intimate here that this means uniformity on every single theological issue. Confession is not the same as theology or dogma. But it does clearly mean a common understanding of the central and decisive points of the proclamation which, further, means those points with which the Confession itself deals. It is exactly for this reason that the Confession limits itself only to necessary articles of faith and to broad and simple and, for the most part, clear points of view.²

¹Kinder, op. cit., p. 69. This is Dr. Kinder's language in interpreting what the Augustana means.

²This is the same general view to which the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century has arrived. "Any full church unity must be based on a large measure of agreement in doctrine." This was made clear at the Second World Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh, Leonard Hodgson (ed.), World Conference on Faith and Order (New York: Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 253, was reiterated at the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, see W. A. Visser 't Hooft (ed.), Man's Disorder and God's Design (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 55, and again at the Second Assembly at Evanston, Visser 't Hooft (ed.), The Evanston Report (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), p. 20. The great difficulty resides, of course, not in agreeing that there ought to be agreement, but in what measure and as to the method of achieving that agreement.

The emphasis in the Augustana is not upon hard and fast dogmatic obligations.¹ Doctrine at this stage was not thought of in the same sense as later orthodoxy viewed it. Theology was not a matter of ironclad propositions. Luther still dominated the scene enough to make this assumption valid. Theology was a living, active, conversation at its roots. Agreements were based, therefore, not upon the concept of infallible documents, arrived at through supernatural means, and binding forever. They were rather to be the consensus of the living community with the dynamic of God working through the gospel and the sacraments as its life source. The absolute norm of the Bible stood in the background, of course, but this, if interpreted correctly, would serve to keep such a dynamic in the theological enterprise. Interpreted incorrectly, it could lead to the death of this ground principle.²

¹Martin J. Heineken, "Doctrinal Formulations," The Unity of the Church, op. cit., pp. 23ff., considers this problem from the proper standpoint. "What," he asks, is the relation between the inner unity of those who have been taken hold of by Christ, and who feel that they are one with all who have been similarly apprehended, and the doctrinal formulations in which this inner unity of faith must now also come to expression?" He argues that the answer must be closer to the principle of qualitative agreement than quantitative agreement. In doing this, he is within the spirit of the Augustana.

²At what time this dynamic began to diminish is one of the still unsolved problems of this fast changing sixteenth century. Sometimes the attitude of this study may seem to make Melancthon the author of this trend. In some ways, this would appear to be so. The Apology to the Augustana, written by Melancthon a year after the Diet of Augsburg, seems to this writer to begin to manifest such inclinations. There is other evidence later in Melancthon's career. This seems to be true, in spite of Melancthon's continuing irenic spirit and the fact that he was ostracized by the dogmatic Lutherans later. The place of Melancthon in this development is, however, not well established and needs a great deal of investigation. More interest in this has been shown recently. A Luther Congress held at Münster, Germany, in the summer of 1960 considered these

Fourth, there is in these articles no indication that the writers had in mind two churches, a visible and an invisible church, or a church properly speaking and a church improperly speaking. Article VIII, which uses the phrase, "properly speaking," has as its purpose the exposition of the idea that there is but one church and this one church exists despite the presence of hypocrites and open sinners. The article condemns the Donatists and in so doing emphasizes the singularity of the church. It may be admitted that the phrase, "properly or strictly speaking," implies its negative, "improperly speaking"--although the Augustana does not use that phrase--but the context of Article VIII precludes any suggestion of dividing the church into two levels or phases or even two senses.

The church is defined in terms of its core. No limits are set, that is, there is no definition of its boundaries. It would be impossible to say, in the spirit of the Augustana, "Here the church begins or ends." The Augustana stood in the center and said, "Here is the church." The church exists as far as the rays radiate from this sun. The boundaries of the church are difficult to define, indeed, are sometimes quite beyond any definition. This, however, is not of

matters. Prof. Ernst Kinder, professor of Systematic Theology and History of Dogma at the University of Münster and chairman of the Department of Theology of the Lutheran World Federation, has related to this writer in conversation his great interest in this problem. The hardening attitude on many questions displayed in the Apology may also be explained by the disillusionment in the Lutheran party following the sharp denunciation of the Augustana by the Catholic party's reply in the Confutation. The unity sought by the Augustana now having been broken by the other side, it was tempting for Melancthon, as irenic as his spirit was, to give vent to a stricter party line and therefore give the appearance of a different view of doctrine.

great consequence for it is not necessary that they be defined. The church's nature can be understood without any precise knowledge as to the church's boundaries. Whatever else needs to be said, or even will be said in the future, the final word of the Augustana was, "Here is the church."

The Problems

Having established the framework in which the Augustana moves, we are able to understand some of the problems that it bequeathed to posterity. Five of these are of special importance.

There is, first of all, the question of the Bible. How is its authority to be understood? What is the relationship of the Word of God to this book? That the Bible is authoritative is never questioned, but neither is the real character of this power which creates Christians and the church ever defined. The Augustana is silent concerning the very principle which makes its own affirmations possible.

Second, there are open questions remaining on certain matters regarding the church as the community of faith. For example, is the community simply the gathering of the individuals who have come to faith? Or is the community more than the sum of those who have been won by the power which inhabits the community? To say it somewhat differently, is the community in its most essential sense the individuals themselves, or is it the organization which they bring into being, or is it some other reality into which the individuals are brought and from which they received a summons to come? In the life of this community, which is the paramount relationship, that

of the individual to God or that of the individuals to each other? This is another way of asking, is the community to be defined principally in terms which are communal or individualistic? Is it a community of individualistic relationships to the great Person, or is it a system of relationships with other persons? Understood in the light of Luther's views, the questions are rather easily answered. Taken only in relation to the Augustana, as so many Lutheran generations were to do, the answers are more tentative. We have tried to establish the essential communal nature of the church in the Augustana, but the question still persists: Is it communal because individuals make it so or because it is communal in its own nature? If the latter is true, is it a community which absorbs the individual within it?

Turning to the individual believer, the Confession has not anticipated the possible interpretations as to how he is to be fully understood. What is the relation of faith to baptism? Is the individual Christian one who receives his forgiveness by virtue of an emotional awareness, an intellectual insight and enlightenment, a decision in favor of a demand placed upon him, or an altogether mystical and completely unintelligible change of status? All these are possible interpretations and all were claimed as true interpretations by later Lutheran history.

Similarly, the relation of the Word and the sacraments is not precisely defined. When the church is constituted by the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, does this imply that two different entities are necessary for the church? Are the sacraments added to the Word,

or are they another expression of the Word? Does one have precedence or importance over the other? What really creates the church? Is it preaching, or the sacraments, or the experience of faith itself? The Augustana is clear concerning the context of the initiative of God and the response of faith but somewhat uncertain as to the deeper problems of their relationship.

Lastly, although the Augustana does view the agreement concerning the gospel in terms of itself, that is, that the amount of agreement necessary for the unity of the church is that which is in the Augustana, the application of this principle is somewhat uncertain. It certainly seems to say that the acceptance of the Augustana itself would be quite sufficient, although it nowhere claims that precisely this form is necessary. Later Lutherans, however, were not to understand the principle of doctrinal agreement in this way. Even in the ecumenical spirit of the twentieth century, Lutherans are insisting that agreements far exceeding the suggestions contained in the Augustana are necessary in order to conform to the Augustana's own principle. Is it mutual recognition that is meant by those sixteenth century princes? Is it the mutual sharing of the correct tradition that is enough for the unity of the church? Or does it actually call for new confessions? Whatever interpretation one places upon the concept of doctrine in the Augustana, the question of the operation of the principle of doctrinal agreement is unanswered. The writer does not mean to imply in any of these instances that the Augustana is at fault in failing to foresee the questions of a later day,

but rather wants to suggest that this is the posture of the Augustana, a posture which was to influence Lutheranism incalculably.

In summary, we can say that the Augsburg Confession envisioned the church as the field of God's activity and in doing so limited its attention to the center of that activity. It did not concern itself with a broad picture which sought to capture every facet of the entire scene. Not necessarily as a consequence of this approach, but nevertheless a consequence, was the fact that the Augustana did not preserve the dynamic that the Reformation had to offer in its understanding of the church. There is a lack of the paradox that is so intrinsically a part of Luther's thought and indeed of all the basic questions with which the Reformation dealt. The church is pictured by the Augustana on a flat plain without mountains or valleys, although it must be admitted that these possibilities were not excluded. In this sense, the orthodoxists were right in asserting that the Augustana did not answer every question and that further explication was necessary if the full impact of the Reformation was to be kept. The difficulties which enveloped the Lutherans centered about the question whether or not those explanations which did indeed follow in history were correct implications of the Augustana and whether or not the great theological systems that were to be erected did carry the spirit so clearly manifested in this remarkable document. This Magna Charta of Protestantism as well as of Lutheranism established certain principles of freedom and ecumenicity that were soon lost by its most loyal

followers. It is precisely this situation which leads us to the twentieth century and the description of certain schools in contemporary Lutheranism which propose concepts of the church which differ widely and yet claim allegiance to this fundamental confession in its history.

PART II. CONTEMPORARY LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH

CHAPTER III

COETUS ELECTORUM

A Supernaturalistic Concept of the Church

To define the church as the whole number of the elect
 . . . is Scriptural.¹

--Francis Pieper on the church

Having considered the concept of the church held by Luther and the Augsburg Confession, we can now proceed to the main body of our study, the description and analysis of four schools of theology in contemporary Lutheranism and their concepts of the church. As has been noted in the Introduction,² two of these schools, repristination theology and Pietism, grew directly out of the two chief periods of theological development which followed the Reformation, the age of orthodoxy and its reaction, Pietism. The concepts of the church in these two schools may therefore be considered the continuance of "old" Lutheran views, although by this terminology we do not mean to imply that no modification of the original positions have occurred in their twentieth century manifestations. Following the description of these two concepts in this and the following chapter, we shall consider

¹Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, trans. Theodore Engelder and W. W. F. Albrecht (3 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951-53), III, p. 398.

²Supra, p. 2.

two other theological schools, that of Lundensian theology and that of the Neo-Lutherans of Germany. These latter approaches are attempts to reinterpret Luther and the Confessions without relation to a particular historical period and can be called "new" views, comparatively speaking. Because of their close affiliation with past Lutheran history, both the repristination and the Pietist positions can be understood only in the light of their historical origins. We must, in each case, first describe briefly their historical backgrounds.

Repristination Theology in Lutheranism

Repristination theology is defined as the school of theology in Lutheranism which seeks to restore the pure and absolute theology of the age of orthodoxy, that period which followed the agreement of the Formula of Concord and dominated the Lutheran Church for about one hundred fifty years. The name was first used to denote the neo-confessionalist school in the nineteenth century headed by such men as Vilmar, Hengstenberg, Harms, Caspari, Kliefoth, and Loehe.¹ This movement, part of the revival of confessional theology in Germany in that century, was deeply influenced by romanticism. Just as the romanticists of that period looked upon the Middle Ages as a golden age which ought to be restored, so the men of the repristination movement sought to recapture the spiritual treasures of the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. They believed that the scientific methods

¹ Supra, p. 9.

of the church fathers of those centuries would be the best tools with which to combat the evils of rationalism.¹ They envisioned their task as that of transmitting to the future church undiminished and in its best form the perfect and absolute dogmatics of this orthodoxy.

We shall use the term repristination theology to designate that school which, in the twentieth century, also views the age of orthodoxy as the definitive period for Lutheran theology and which regards the perpetuation of that theology the main task of the Lutheran theologian. It is a term which can be regarded as a synonym for the more popular term "orthodox." "Orthodox" is not the best word to employ, however, since every school of Lutheran theology regards itself as orthodox, that is, as true and faithful to Luther and the Confessions. Pietism, for example, regards itself as orthodox, although it does not consider the seventeenth century as its model. Repristination theology, in short, views Luther and the Confessions through the eyes of the church fathers of the age of orthodoxy and understands their theology as being the final and complete Lutheran position.

1. The age of orthodoxy

After the religious peace which came with the Formula of Concord, Lutherans turned to the task of constructing a summa of their theology. This impressive goal was motivated by three circumstances of the late sixteenth century. First, a confessional consciousness had developed by this time. The

¹Neve, op. cit., p. 129.

controversies leading to the Formula and the gradual acceptance of the fact that Lutheranism was a distinct and independent tradition, completely separate from Roman Catholicism on the one side and the Reformed and Anabaptists on the other had made the Lutherans conscious of their own identity. They became aware of their own lack of a theological edifice comparable to the Institutes of Religion of John Calvin or the great works of Thomas Aquinas. Neither the many scattered essays of Luther nor the brief themes of the Confessions could satisfy the need for expression. Second, the revival of Roman Catholic vigor in the Council of Trent and the developing Counter Reformation demanded a continuous voice of refutation. A Lutheran apologetic was sorely needed. Third, the posture which Lutheranism had developed as a result of the Melanchthonian interpretation of the Reformation required the production of a complete theological system. Although, as we have already noted,¹ Melanchthon's role in this development is not altogether clear, two basic points are evident. The first, and of greatest importance, was the intellectualization of faith by Melanchthon. Whereas faith for Luther was a concept which involved the whole person in a dynamic interrelationship with God, a relation based chiefly on trust, faith for Melanchthon reduced itself to the assent of the intellect to doctrine. Justification was for him the decision to accept as objectively valid the Scriptural teaching about the work of Christ.² This act of the intellect in turn moved the will to acquiesce to

¹Supra, p. 97.

²Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 42.

the divine will, which included both the natural and the revealed laws of God. The second principle in Melanchthon which was to flower into orthodoxy was the conviction that philosophy was necessary not only for the method but also for the content of theology. Both of these bases called for a heavy emphasis upon doctrinal formulation--an emphasis so great that the interest in a summa could not be stopped. It is most interesting at this point to note that although many of Melanchthon's particular doctrinal views were refuted by the Formula of Concord, his more basic interests, the two points just noted, were victorious and indeed dominated Lutheranism for one hundred fifty years and to a large extent has governed its history to the present day.

Three characteristics of this orthodox age are of special interest to this study: (1) the methodology of the theological science; (2) the primary principle of the systems; (3) the concept of the church.

Two parallel developments occurred in theological method in this period. From Melanchthon through Chemnitz and Hutter to Gerhard, the synthetic method was used.¹ This method was largely an exposition of Biblical teaching and was inductive in its approach. It was interested, however, in causes and presuppositions and began with God as the first cause, proceeding through the doctrines of man, Christ, the church, and the last things. After a hundred years of this approach, orthodoxy in its maturity was able to use the ana-

¹I am indebted to Dr. Pelikan for this discussion on method. Ibid., pp. 62ff.

lytic method. This method begins with the results and goals of the divine plan, in contradistinction to the synthetic method, and from these works toward the causes which make those goals possible. A broad base of both theological and philosophical knowledge is necessary to make possible the advance from the inductive to the deductive method so that speculations regarding the interrelationships among the various elements of the body of doctrine can be explored in great detail. Johann Baier and David Hollaz are examples of the analytic method at its best.

This methodological evolution was evidence of a more important development--the increasing part which Aristotelian philosophy played. Melanchthon was still under the influence of Luther's abhorrence of Aristotle in his first Loci of 1521, and tried to avoid any philosophical involvement. The later editions of the Loci, however, showed an accelerating intrusion of Aristotelian categories. Phrases such as causa finalis, causa proxima, and causa instrumentalis occur more and more frequently. Understanding Melanchthon at all in his later writings is impossible without a knowledge of the Meta-physics and Organon of Aristotle.¹ This interest in Aristotle

¹How this attitude could ensue in the light of Luther's antagonism to the great Greek is suggested by J. A. Dorner, op. cit., I, p. 117. The change in the history of the Reformation came in Melanchthon, he asserts. "For some time, Melanchthon allowed himself to be drawn in by Luther into animosity against Aristotle and philosophy in general; but soon (already towards the end of the third decade of the century) he came to entertain the hope that Christianity might be exhibited as the true philosophy, as it is, and that the studia renascentia must also be the means of producing a new philosophy, which would no longer be, as he thought at first, merely Aristotle restored to the position of being rightly understood."

was soon reinforced by the attitudes in the university education of the day. A knowledge of Aristotle was a mark of culture.¹ As might be expected when Aristotelian categories are used in a theological summa, the interest was pinpointed in the problem of causality, a prominent feature of the Aristotelian metaphysics, and natural theology. The climax in this development was reached when it became widely held that even an unregenerate man could gain an understanding of the eternal truths of the Bible because of the logic used in it and because of the significance of the natural knowledge of God. This concession did not include the salvation of the theologian involved, and was termed "external" knowledge, but at the same time did not prejudice theological accurateness. Theology became, at this point, an exercise in Aristotelian logic manipulating the materials furnished by the Bible and the Confessions.²

The primary principle of this enterprise was the authority of the Bible. For Luther the event of faith was the substance of the Christian religion and the truth which produced from itself the whole vitality as well as the structure of theology. The Confessions, too, considered themselves only explications of Article IV of the Augustana, the article on justification by faith. This center was shifted by seventeenth century orthodoxy to the Bible, its efficacy and properties.

¹ Ibid., p. 52.

² The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, was defended philosophically. Philosophy was not only necessary in order to grasp the "subtler matters," but without reason, the mystery of the Trinity cannot even be understood. For a fuller discussion, see Pelikan, op. cit., pp. 68ff.

The perfection of the Bible became the sole principle of theology and the stress was put on proving that the doctrines of the Bible are true.¹ The assurance of personal salvation was not necessarily lost in this development, but certainly became only one principle among many and was considered a secondary principle which evolved out of the primary principle of the authority of the Bible. This was actually a reversal of the Reformation stance and transformed the formal principle, the authority of the Bible, into the material principle of religion. Whether or not the great men of this period intended this to happen is difficult to ascertain. Most likely they did not. In any case, wherever this theological posture permeated the life of the church there developed a sterility which was termed "dead orthodoxy" by its opponents, and which led directly to the protest movement of Pietism.

With this increased importance given the place of the Bible there developed, of course, great interest in the characteristics of the Biblical authority. The Bible was regarded as the written Word of God, inspired by God in such a way that God is the author and the writers only the instruments which He employed. No distinction was made between the Bible and the Word of God, and in consequence the Word of God was not believed to be anywhere but in the Bible. Since both the form and the content of the Bible were held as inspired, it followed that everything in the Bible was altogether and in every particular true and free from all error.²

¹Dorner, op. cit., II, pp. 123ff.

²An excellent summary of the seventeenth century under-

This view of the Bible was not peculiar to the Lutherans. Both the Roman Catholics and the Reformed held similar positions. The weakness of this attitude by Lutherans was not that they were unable to foresee the nineteenth century Biblical criticism, but that they had smothered Luther's insights into the nature of the "word" and erected such an inflexible theological structure with this principle that future generations were to find it very difficult to distinguish between this scholastic interpretation of Luther and Luther's own dynamic approach.

The concept of the church was more flexible than the concept of authority. Melancthon in the Apology differentiated between the visible and invisible church--which was common terminology--but expressed a preference for the visible church, the coetus vocatorum.¹ The church for him was characterized by its possession of the truth, the pure doctrine. All the church fathers did not follow him at this point, however. The fundamental definition of the church as a communion of faith and the Holy Ghost was held by all, but this was also understood to mean that the invisible church was the "real" church. Leonard Hutter, for example, in his very important Compend of Lutheran Theology published in 1609, says, "If we consider the church in so far as it is the communion

standing of inspiration is found in Robert Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture (London: Oliver and Boyd, Ltd., 1955). Schmid, op. cit., quotes from the leading figures of that day under the categories of authority, inspiration, sufficiency, perspicuity and efficacy of the Scriptures, pp. 38-91.

¹Book of Concord, op. cit., pp. 168-182.

of faith and the Holy Ghost, who dwells in the hearts of believers, it is called invisible and the real church of the elect."¹

The two views were accommodated in a formulation of the church in a narrower and a wider sense. The church in its narrower definition is the assembly of the elect, the invisible church, which exists within the wider church, the assembly of the called, the visible church. The leading theologians continued to hold to the concept of the oneness of the church and denied that there were two churches. Johan Gerhard, for example, said:

We do not affirm that there are two Churches, the one true and internal, and the other nominal and external; but we say that the Church is one and the same, viz., the entire assembly of the called considered in a two-fold manner, namely esother (from within) and exother (from without), or, with respect to the call and outward association, consisting in the profession of faith and the use of the Sacraments, and with respect to inner regeneration and internal association, consisting in the bond of the Spirit.²

The language of the Augustana, "the church properly speaking," was also often used. This designation referred to the invisible church. The accompanying term, the church "improperly speaking," means the visible church, the association of those who outwardly confess the faith and use the sacraments. The use of the distinction, properly and improperly, reveals the prejudice of the age. The proper church, the true church, is the invisible church. It is evident that the majority of the

¹ Leonard Hutter, Compend of Lutheran Theology, trans. H. E. Jacobs and G. F. Spieker (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1873), p. 147.

² Quoted by Schmid, op. cit., p. 592.

church fathers held the view that the true church is the coetus electorum, the assembly of the elect. Only God knows who belongs to the "real" church.

Other distinctions, such as universal and particular, true and false, collective and representative, were also important facets of the ecclesiology. The church universal was the name given to the general assembly of all true believers whom God has gathered from the beginning of the world to the end,¹ and was therefore a further explication of the invisible church. The church particular was the term for a part of the universal church, that group of believers in a certain time and place which belongs in the inner spiritual communion.² The true or pure church was considered that church "in which all things necessary to be believed for salvation and to be done for attaining holiness of life, are clearly taught from God's Word, without the mixture of any hurtful errors, and the Sacraments are rightly administered according to the institution of Christ . . ."³ The false or impure church was the assembly of men "in which the doctrine of faith is publicly proclaimed from the Word of God, with a mixture or errors . . ."⁴ The distinction between true and false was not necessarily the same as the distinction between visible and invisible or proper and improper. It was usually a description assigned to the visible church. The representative

¹Ibid., p. 590.

²Loc. cit., p. 591.

³Ibid., p. 596, a quote from Hollaz.

⁴Loc. cit.

church was defined as the instrumentality through which the leadership of the church is exercised, that is, the ministry. The collective church designated the whole number of the actual members of the church.

Some general conclusions about the seventeenth century's understanding of the church can be drawn: (1) Although there existed a certain amount of flexibility and openness regarding a final formulation of a doctrine of the nature of the church, general sympathy existed for the idea that the invisible church was the true church. This was usually called the assembly of the elect. (2) The concept of the oneness of the church was not abandoned, however, and the visible aspect of the church was constantly enunciated. In this respect, the test of pure doctrine was applied to ascertain whether or not a visible church was true or false. (3) Although the church was defined as the communion of faith and the Holy Ghost, the communal aspect was not emphasized. The relation between community and individual was not a problem. Actually, it was the individualistic approach which was dominate since the church was most often conceived as the number of the elect, the simple addition of those saved. (4) This permitted a more ecumenical spirit than might be expected in the milieu of an emphasis on pure doctrine. An individual who had the true faith belonged to the church universal and thus the true and invisible church, no matter which visible church claimed him.

2. The two types of the church

For anyone wishing to recover the dogmatics of the seventeenth century, a special problem arises when the doctrine of the church is considered. It is possible, on the one hand, to accept without question the idea that the doctrines of Christianity can and ought to be pure and absolute and to believe that this principle leads one to the emphasis upon the true church in its visible form as an organization which teaches this pure doctrine, and, on the other hand, with the same premise, to envision the true church as being the invisible communion of true believers. In the former, Melancthon's phrase, the coetus vocatorum, embodies the best understanding of what the church is. In the latter, the more pronounced feelings of the age of orthodoxy are emphasized by defining the true church as the coetus electorum. Orthodoxy had used the word "true" in two different contexts. It had said that the visible church is true when the pure doctrine is taught, but it also said that the true, that is, the "real" church is invisible. As a result, orthodoxy said the visible church is "true" if it has the pure doctrine, but the invisible church is the "true" church. Two types of the church resulted from these two usages. The nineteenth century re-pristination school chose the former, coetus vocatorum, and described the church as a visible temple of truth. The re-pristination theology of the twentieth century, which is the subject of this chapter, chooses the latter, and emphasizes the invisible church, the coetus electorum.

The nineteenth century view is well illustrated in

Wilhelm Loehe's Three Books Concerning the Church, first published in 1844.¹ Loehe admits to the distinction between the called and the chosen, the visible and the invisible church, but he maintains that it is a "perversion" of the distinction to suggest that the invisible church is to be preferred. This would make the church a pure abstraction and not a church at all.² Just as the soul and body of a man are united into one person, so the invisible and visible church are one church. They are, in fact, so completely one that the invisible church is included in the visible and the visible church is in possession of all of the gifts of the invisible church. Anyone who is a member of the invisible church is necessarily also a member of the visible church. To press any differences does violence to a true understanding of the church. He also admits to the distinction between the particular and the universal in describing the church, and sees much error in many particular churches which would make them false churches. It is clear, he says, that all the particular churches do not have the complete truth, but this does not exclude the possibility that one particular church has the complete truth. Indeed it is "arrogant" to maintain that the truth is not fully expressed in at least one particular church, for to deny this would be a denial of the "reality" of truth.³ There is no way that the errors which do exist can be discerned unless there is one

¹ Wilhelm Loehe, Three Books Concerning the Church, trans. Edward T. Horn (Reading: Pilger Publishing House, 1908).

² Ibid., p. 63.

³ Ibid., p. 85.

absolute standard by which the churches can be judged. There must be a "touchstone" of the truth.¹ To know whether or not a particular church has the full truth, one need only examine her confessions. If they are fully in accord with the Bible, then it can be said that this particular church is the true church, for the invisible and visible churches coincide. That there are hypocrites in the particular church in no wise detracts from this conclusion, for it is the truth itself which determines whether or not the church is true, not the erring members therein.

Having made this examination, presumably, Loehe comes to the conclusion that the Lutheran Church, though only a particular church and not the universal church, nevertheless contains the whole truth and is the "church par excellence."² Because no one has ever been able to prove that her confessions deviate in a single point from the Bible, it is possible to say that in the Lutheran Church the church exists visibly in all her glory and here the coetus vocatorum and the coetus electorum merge.

The representative church, that is, the ministry, receives a high priority in this approach for it is the teaching of the church vested in the ministry which really determines the church's being. The authority and rights of the ministry are carefully guarded and ordination is valued highly.

The second type cannot accept the proposition that

¹Ibid., p. 87.

²Ibid., p. 105.

there can be any hypocrites in the true church. Even though a particular church may have a perfect doctrine as, for example, the Lutheran Church, it cannot be concluded that the true church coincides with even this church par excellence, since there are within her borders those not of the true communion of faith. The true church must be defined as that invisible communion of the elect which is known only to God. Even though there may be a great emphasis upon the teaching ministry, it cannot be assumed that this in itself will preserve the pure doctrine. The pure doctrine is kept rather by the confessions and those individuals who are indeed the true church. This attitude leads to a downgrading of the office of the ministry and an intense interest in the congregational aspect of the church. The church really exists only where this true faith is actually held and this may be only in the congregation and not at all in the representative church. The true church is the collective church.

This second type has received a tremendous impetus in the twentieth century in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and in its chief theological spokesmen, C. F. W. Walther and his disciple, Francis Pieper.

The Loehe view was very influential in the last century in the Iowa Synod in the United States, which later was merged into the American Lutheran Church (1,000,000 members). This can be said to be the dominant view of that church body although there are also some followers in the United Lutheran Church in America (2,500,000 members). In Europe, the Loehe following is virtually absent in Scandinavia (the high church

movement in Sweden being mainly liturgical in its emphasis and of a different type and origin) and, although present in considerable force in Germany, has been largely replaced by the "new" New Lutheran view which will be discussed in Chapter VII.

The "low church" congregational type of repristination theology has been by far the more aggressive of the two. Although its most active advocate is the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (2,500,000 members), a segment of The Evangelical Lutheran Church (1,000,000 members) is sympathetic, and there are pockets of appreciation also in the United Lutheran Church in America. Before the introduction of some of the emphases of the Erlangen school into the United Lutheran Church about the time of the First World War, the majority of American Lutheranism adhered to one of the two types described above, with the remaining minority loyal to an older, Pietist tradition. Since that time, both the United Lutheran Church and the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church (600,000 members) have drawn away from the repristination views through the influence of Lundensian theology, to be discussed in Chapter VI, and the New Lutherans.

The Missourian position, as this second type is sometimes called, has little or no sympathy in Scandinavia, with perhaps some few exceptions, such as Professor Leiv Aalen at Menighetsfakultetet, the Independent Theological Faculty, in Oslo, Norway. Its strength in Germany is difficult to determine, but it certainly cannot be considered a major voice.¹

¹There is a small free Lutheran church in Germany which maintains a close contact with the Missouri Synod.

The two Lutheran churches in Australia show more sympathy for it than any other churches outside of the Synodical Conference.¹ Dr. Hermann Sasse is the leading advocate in the Australian churches.

Repristination theology must be considered a minority viewpoint in world Lutheranism in the mid-twentieth century, though it exercises quite a strong influence in the United States. Because it finds its locus in the Missouri Synod, we now turn our attention to Francis Pieper.

3. Francis Pieper

The point of view chosen for this study is that of Francis Pieper (1852-1931), formerly president of Concordia Lutheran Seminary (1887-1931), St. Louis, Missouri, a seminary of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, president of that church body (1899-1911), and the author of a Christian Dogmatics in three volumes.² He was the spiritual heir of C. F. W. Walther, the distinguished theologian in the early years of the Missouri Synod in the last century and revered today in their circles as a patron saint. Pieper's Dogmatics is presently regarded as the best expression of the Missourian view.³

¹The Synodical Conference is a loose confederation of the following American churches: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; the Wisconsin Synod; the Slovak Synod; the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

²Pieper, op. cit.

³The Forw rd to the Dogmatics says in reference to Pieper: "His work will go down to future generations as the dogmatic standard, alongside of the works of Walther and his earlier colleagues, of the Missouri Synod. . . . Among the newer dogmatical works that are to be warmly commended to our Pastors we give first place to this dogmatics of Francis Pieper." Ibid., p. vi.

Pieper's theology cannot easily be described in relation to other theologies. It is an "isolationist" theology which seeks to cut itself off from every expression except that which is identical with its own. Although it is tinged with the romanticism of its predecessors in Germany, it is not of the same kind. Pieper has no nostalgia for the old Germany or for reincarnating any particular cultural period in history. The nationalism and monarchical ambitions of the nineteenth century are not present here.¹ Pieper looks back only to the theological monuments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, seeing in the church fathers of that day a clear exposition of the true religion. The great names of those centuries are quoted profusely,² the favorites being J. A. Quenstedt, Martin Chemnitz, John Gerhard, J. W. Baier-Walther, Abraham Calov, and John Musaeus. Quenstedt and Gerhard are the most often quoted, Quenstedt receiving an eight-column listing in small print of references and Gerhard four. This is revealing since Gerhard is generally considered "the" theologian of this orthodox period and Quenstedt is often called with somewhat less enthusiasm the "bookkeeper" of the

¹Since the Missourians were forced to leave Germany as a result of the heavy hand of the King of Prussia in forcing the Reformed-Lutheran Union in Prussia, they can hardly be expected to share in the rising Prussian enthusiasm of nineteenth century Germany. For a history of the early period see W. O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953).

²An index volume, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. IV (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), was edited by Walter W. F. Albrecht and added to the series in 1957. Containing 1025 pages, it is larger than any volume of the Dogmatics itself. A subject, author, and Scripture passage index are included.

Wittenberg orthodoxy.¹

Pieper follows the general method of the Lutheran scholastics by using the language, categories and logic of Aristotelian philosophy.² Although Aristotle is pictured as following a completely false religion, Pieper echoes Melancthon's suggestion in the Apology³ that Aristotle had no peer in the philosophy of the "natural knowledge of God."⁴ The allusion is made that Aristotle is the "theologian" of the pagans.⁵

The general attitude in this regard is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, philosophy is condemned as being "diametrically opposed to Christianity," "sure to by-pass the Christian religion," and "the repudiation of the divine authority of Holy Scripture."⁶ Philosophy is the work of man's mind and thus by its very nature a "religion of good works" whereas Christianity, as we shall see, is considered completely divine and supernatural.⁷ On the other hand, it is the train-

¹Schmid, *op. cit.*, pp. 667-690. Short biographies of the leading men are conveniently summarized. Schmid goes on to say, "The objection is often presented against Quenstedt, that his excessive attention to the details of his system has deprived dogmatic theology of its life, by reducing its doctrines to the shape of mathematical formulae." p. 670.

²Schmid, *op. cit.*, p. 665, finds it necessary in this compendium of orthodox theology to include an appendix containing a glossary of the Aristotelian terms used.

³*Supra*, Chapter II.

⁴Pieper, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 374.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 16.

ing in this particular philosophic method which permits the repristination approach to theology and presupposes every conclusion.

The claim is to a complete fidelity to the Bible,¹ but, of course, the Bible is seen through the eyes of Luther and the Confessions. Luther is the great hero,² but it is difficult to call him the inspirer. He is rather the source of doctrine, the teacher of theological propositions. The Confessions are accepted as the pure expression of Luther's thought and are regarded as canon law, to be neither criticized nor subjected to possible challenge or searching analysis. They are final, complete, and absolutely authoritative.

This does not mean that Pieper is not aware of later theological movements. The Dogmatics is a masterpiece of "potshotting" at the whole range of the theological enterprise. The "Ichtheologie" of the Erlangen school gets special attention in attack after attack.³ Under the hated term rationalism is contained virtually every development in theology since

¹The first sentence in the Dogmatics is: "We take the position that Holy Scripture, in contradistinction to all other books in the World, is God's own infallible Word and therefore the only source and norm of Christian doctrine." Ibid., p. 3.

²Luther is the most quoted figure in the Dogmatics, with thirty-six columns of small print references. Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 951-969.

³J. C. K. von Hofmann, the leader of this distinguished Lutheran school, is charged with being dishonest because his self-assurance is self-deception (Ibid., I, p. 115), his theology will effect no faith (I, p. 66), his method is sleight of hand (I, p. 148), his approach to the wholeness of Scripture is senseless (I, pp. 201, 265, 364), his false doctrine nullifies entire Christian doctrine (II, p. 371), he has a false doctrine of church (II, p. 372), he disregards the Bible (III, p. 446).

Schleiermacher, including such diverse targets as the Unitarians and the Pope. The chief battleground is still, however, the Reformation. Roman Catholicism is the chief enemy, with Zwingli, Calvin, and the Anabaptists following closely behind with little distinction as to rank. The reasons for the above become clear in an analysis of the theology itself.

The Absoluteness of the Christian Religion

For Francis Pieper, the Christian religion is absolute. There is no possible supplement, improvement, or development. "It is unsurpassable."¹ The basis for this absoluteness does not lie in its logical whole or in a perfect morality, but rather in the possession of two perfect criteria. First, Christianity delivers a "perfect salvation,"² and second, its source and norm is a perfect book, God's own Word, the Bible.³ The consequences of this view follow in logical course.

1. The two absolutes

The absolutely unique character of Christianity is maintained whenever the inviolate character of the satisfactio vicaria is preserved. The perfection does not lie in man's ability to discern salvation but in God's action in reconciling the world by the vicarious satisfaction of His Son, thus making man perfect in His sight. As long as it is believed

¹ Ibid., I, p. 34.

² Ibid., p. 35.

³ Ibid., p. 37.

and taught that Christ's atonement has reconciled God, Christianity will be eo ipso the absolute and perfect religion.¹

Its perfection is guaranteed by the Bible, the perfect book which is beyond criticism.² The Bible is "infallible, inviolate" and "identical with the Word of God."³ This is true because God supplied the "very words that constitute the Scripture."⁴ The whole Bible is verbally inspired, that is, men wrote the words God supplied them. And this means, of course, every word, even those that refer to historical, geographical, and scientific matters.⁵ The impulse and the command to write is likewise included in the inspiration process.⁶ The transmission of the original text, however, although supervised by God, is not to be considered in the same category. The absoluteness of the Bible is limited to the original text.⁷ There are variant readings but this in no way reduces the value of the Bible nor influences its absoluteness. The Word of God comes a priori, prior to any human investigation, through the promise of God. The Bible itself guarantees its own absoluteness. It also comes a posteriori, as a result of scientific investigation, and it is established that the var-

¹ Ibid., p. 36.

² Ibid., p. 37.

³ Ibid., p. 213.

⁴ Ibid., p. 219.

⁵ Ibid., p. 220.

⁶ Ibid., p. 224.

⁷ Ibid., p. 237.

iant readings affect no doctrine.¹ Any apparent discrepancies can and must wait for clarification in the hereafter.

Pieper adopts the properties of the Bible as taught by the age of orthodoxy and speaks at length of the attributes of divine authority, divine efficacy, perfection and perspicuity.² There can be no doubt that Pieper reflects the seventeenth century conviction that the authority of the Bible is the sine qua non of Christianity. As is often the case, he goes further than his own teachers. Whatever degree of maneuverability might have been left in Lutheran theology at the end of the age of orthodoxy has completely vanished in Francis Pieper. There is no hint that anything has happened since 1800 in Biblical criticism that would have the slightest effect on this theory of verbal inspiration. The opposite would rather be true, that is, since the Bible has been attacked, as he would interpret the meaning of Biblical criticism, it must be defended all the more vigorously.

2. Theology as doctrine, aptitude, and confession

In the light of the foregoing, it is not surprising that this school views theology as a completely objective discipline.³ The presentation in oral and written form of the teachings of the Bible is the task of theology. Theology is simply the Bible rearranged into doctrines.⁴ Properly put into

¹Ibid., p. 238.

²Pieper, op. cit., I, p. 307.

³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴Ibid., p. 52.

order and expressed in language suitable for the most effective communication, the Biblical concepts can be made into propositional truths. Doctrine is to Pieper not the opinions of man but immutable divine truth, or, to say it his way, "God's doctrine."¹

There is human doctrine, that is, doctrine not conforming to the Bible, but this is not Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine is divine.² Only Christian doctrine can be permitted in the church.³ Christians are forbidden to entertain human doctrine and must cut off from their fellowship those who entertain such errors.⁴ Theology must confine itself to the "compilation, systematizing of the divine doctrine contained in the Scripture."⁵

Pieper would admit however a subjective sense to the theological enterprise, and this he defines as the personal qualification of the theologian.⁶ It is the "proficiency which the incumbents of the teaching office of the church possess."⁷ Two basic qualifications are necessary: First, the conversion of the theologian, and by this he means the personal faith in Christ, the faith in the forgiveness of sins by grace for the sake of Christ's satisfactio vicaria; second,

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 53.

³Ibid., p. 54.

⁴Ibid., p. 55.

⁵Ibid., p. 58.

⁶Ibid., p. 46.

⁷Ibid.

the willingness of the theologian to submit himself completely to the divine authority of the Bible, thus recognizing the limitation of his field of operation. Here Pieper departs from some of the more eminent fathers of his favorite century and displays the influence of Pietism.

In this scheme, the Confessions of the Lutheran Church are considered the affirmations of the divine doctrine. They must be in complete harmony with the absolute theology. The theologian subscribes to them quia, of course, since they are in agreement with the Word of God, and not quatenus, insofar as they are such.¹ The Confessions cannot be qualified by such terms as essentially correct, historically occasioned or conditioned, and according to the spirit. It is admitted that the historical, scientific, and casual remarks in the Confessions are not included in the same sense they are in the Bible for the Confessions, technically, are not inspired in the same manner. Nevertheless, because of their total accord with that which is inspired, there can be no depreciation of their authority. The Bible is norma and the Confessions norma normata. One can also distinguish between them with such distinctions as norma primaria and norma secundaria or norma decisions and norma descretionis.²

3. The differentiations in Christian doctrine

Even though theological science engages in the process of compiling divine doctrines from the Bible, all of which are

¹Ibid., p. 354.

²Ibid., p. 358.

equally authoritative, certain differentiations must be made within this corpus. The most important division is that of law and gospel. These two categories of doctrine are equally authoritative but have different functions and spheres of application. The law is that which "curses everyone who has not kept it perfectly."¹ The gospel is the news that "God does not impute to man the transgression of the law."² Both law and gospel are preached in equal measure but each must be kept separate from the other. Indeed, one of the more difficult tasks of the theologian is precisely that of knowing when and where to apply law and gospel.³

A second distinction is that of fundamental and non-fundamental doctrine.⁴ This is not the granting of the right to shun or relegate to a secondary role any doctrine. It has, however, the practical value of recognizing which doctrines deal directly with salvation and which do not. The Bible itself makes the decision regarding the differentiation.⁵ All doctrines relating to faith in the forgiveness of sin, those which are preparation for faith, and those which presuppose faith, as well as all doctrines which follow as a consequence of faith, are considered fundamental. These may be further distinguished as primary and secondary.⁶ Non-fundamental doc-

¹ Ibid., p. 78.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

⁶ Ibid., p. 85.

trines are those truths of the Bible which are helpful to the Christian life but which are not the foundation of faith. Their denial endangers faith, however, and no deviation from them can be tolerated. The historical, geographical, and archaeological truths of the Bible are included in this category.¹

The open questions in theology are not those about which men can in good conscience disagree and remain in the same Christian fellowship. There are no doctrines which are not universally binding. The term "open" must be reserved for those questions which the Bible itself has left open.²

With the disappearance of the last possibility of any openness, it is evident that this theology proposes a completely closed system. This summa is the last summa. This attitude, of course, as we shall see, has enormous implications for the concept of the church.

The Application of Salvation

Pieper considers justification by faith to be the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae in traditional Lutheran fashion even though the formal principle, the authority of the Bible, has the same absolute status as in the age of orthodoxy.³ Since, as we shall see presently, faith is made the constitutive factor of the church, it is necessary at this stage of the discussion to understand just what Pieper means

¹ Ibid., p. 85.

² Ibid., p. 93.

³ This Pieper maintains even though justification is not discussed until p. 503 of the Second Volume of the Dogmatics!

by assigning this lofty role to faith. In his terminology, justification by faith is the "application of salvation."¹ This concept must be placed in a setting which includes his particular view of the atonement, the nature of faith and election, and the function of faith in justification.

1. The objective atonement

The achievement of salvation by God for man is conceived in altogether juridical terms. In fact, "the process of reconciling the world is in all its factors juridical."² The immutable God demands of man obedience to His will, that is, His law. Consequently, eternal damnation is pronounced upon all transgressors. Christ, being God, was above the law, but willingly accepted the punishment due man and in man's stead fulfilled the law. He vicariously suffered the punishment man deserved. The term "in our stead" describes exactly this juridical act. The phrase "for our benefit" must be interpreted in the light of the prior consideration "in our stead."³

The term "vicarious satisfaction" encompasses perfectly the meaning of God's act in Christ, even though it is not Biblical language. The atonement can and must be described as wholly substitutional. God's wrath was appeased and His judgment of condemnation set aside. This juridical event was "pure actus forensis" and means that God no longer accounts

¹Pieper, op. cit., II, p. 397.

²Ibid., p. 354.

³Ibid., p. 346.

man's sins to him but pronounces all men justified.¹ This atonement, it must be repeated, effected the reconciliation of all men with God. "The reconciliation is an accomplished fact, just like the creation of the world."² The reconciliation is altogether objective. It occurred "in" God. Christ's death accomplished this change "in" God. It was done at a particular moment in history and cannot be modified in any way by man's attitude. The message concerning this "already occurred" reconciliation is the gospel, the foundation of faith. Unless the complete objectivity of Christ's work is clearly understood, Pieper believes that faith becomes a meritorious work, an idea which, to him, is pure heresy.

2. Faith

The acceptance of the reconciliation effected through Christ's satisfaction is termed the subjective reconciliation and takes place through faith. Although the reconciliation of God to man is wholly independent of man and his mood, the gift of salvation must be accepted by man.³ Salvation, in order to become effective for a particular person, must be believed, that is, appropriated by faith by that person.

What this really means is of great importance to Pieper and his school and is the key to the nature of the church. The nature of faith is elucidated at great length, using the scholastic tools in their most subtle and grand manner. The

¹Ibid., p. 355.

²Ibid., p. 347.

³Ibid., p. 400.

most important distinction made is that between "what" faith is and "how" it comes.

Faith, basically, is the "reliance of the heart on the promises of grace."¹ It is neither notitia historica or assensus historicus. Faith is in every case personal--the application of the gospel to the individual. This includes comprehension by the intellect and acquiescence of the will as well as fiducia. Indeed, it is always fides actualis.² This activity is "performed by man whether he be awake or sleeping, whether he be an adult or a child, whether under normal circumstances when he is conscious of his faith or in the severest hour of trial when he imagines he has lost his faith."³

Faith is equivalent to conversion. The terms usually applied to the ordo salutis such as illuminatio, vivificatio, regeneratio, vocatio and even poenitentia can be called synonyms of faith even though in its narrower sense faith takes its place in the sequence of the salvation events.

Conversion, or the creation of faith, is conceived in completely monergistic terms. God alone effects it. Man is merely the subiectum convertendum.⁴ This faith is received in that instantaneous moment when the Holy Spirit, after arousing the terrors of conscience, creates it in the sinner. There is no middle state between non-conversion and conversion,

¹Ibid., p. 421.

²Ibid., p. 433.

³Ibid., p. 436.

⁴Ibid., p. 456.

between unbelief and faith. God has either created faith or He has not. Man's role in this divine act can only be that of resistance. He can resist and prevent his conversion, but he can contribute nothing to it.¹ Indeed, synergism is considered the great enemy of the Christian religion. Faith and works are sharply separated. Even the slightest suggestion of the meritorious work of consent to faith is rigorously condemned. Faith remains in God's province alone, even though the possession of faith by man permits the use of the word subjective and the conversion of man can be termed a subjective reconciliation. Man takes no initiatory act and receives no credit for faith. Faith is a pure gift of grace. It is therefore divine, coming from God, and of such a nature that man "uses" it but never creates it.

3. The doctrine of election

The shadow of the doctrine of election looms large in this picture of faith. Eternal election is not intuitu fidei finalis, the decree of God to receive those who in His foreknowledge He had known would persevere to the end. Rather, election is viewed as the securing of the salvation of God's children by a decree before the creation of the world, an election only of those "actually saved," those faithful to the end. Election causes faith and salvation. Indeed, it "procures, works, keeps and promotes salvation."²

Pieper does not intend by this to convey the idea that

¹Ibid., p. 464.

²Ibid., III, p. 416.

God first elected absolutely and then sent Christ to execute the order, thus tying election to the sovereignty of God. Election is an auxiliary doctrine to the doctrine of grace. It serves to deepen and intensify justification by faith by relating the merit of man's salvation to the grace of God alone. Election is seen as gospel and not law.

This means that election does not belong only to the last step of the ordo salutis, the final salvation in eternal life, but to the entire way of salvation. Though not a central doctrine, election nevertheless is a fundamental one, for it colors the whole understanding of God's relationship with man. At the same time, election does not pertain to the wicked. There is no election to wrath or to damnation, as the Calvinists teach.¹ Man's condemnation must be laid altogether at his own door, even as man's election to salvation is entirely God's doing.

The "how" of election is an inexplicable mystery.² Seen from the standpoint of eternity, that is, before creation, faith is neither anterior nor posterior to election. God resolved to favor His children with the gift of faith. His decision was not made absolutely, that is, without any relation to man's faith, for He chose to bless the saved with faith; nevertheless, He did not so choose "in the light of faith." Seen in time, election precedes faith, and is its cause. The many questions raised by such careful distinctions cannot be solved by man, yet are necessary to faith. To say anything

¹Ibid., p. 494.

²Ibid., p. 502.

else gives rise either to Calvinism, denying universalia gratis, on the one hand, or synergism, denying sola gratia on the other.¹ Grace must be insisted upon as being both universal in its offering and particular in the choice of its benefactors.

4. The function of faith in justification

If God creates faith and if He has already decided in whom the faith is to be created, the question as to the function of faith is raised. If man is justified by this kind of divine faith, how can faith be described in its relation to man? Pieper defines faith as the instrument for apprehending the forgiveness of sins. In quoting the Formula of Concord, he declares, "The sole office and property of faith is that it is the means or instrument by and through which God's grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the gospel are received, apprehended, accepted and applied to us, and appropriated."²

Faith is therefore a neutral entity, a method of operation, an organ of transmission. The justification is done by and in God. Man receives the benefits of the reconciliation via the means of faith. Faith does not justify in itself, but communicates the justification of God. Faith thus has no intrinsic value of its own. Man is saved "by" grace but "through" faith. Even though man "has" faith, it is a divine thing, for it is wholly a creation of and a gift from God. Seen from man's

¹Ibid., p. 503.

²Ibid., p. 438.

viewpoint, it is not his, but was given to him; seen from God's viewpoint, it is that vehicle which He gave man to use to appropriate the salvation He offers.

The True and Universal Church

Comparable to the way doctrine is conceived as completely divine and faith is defined as a divine creation, the church is envisioned by Pieper as a supernatural entity, an invisible communion of faith, the coetus electorum. The church is the sum total of "all those, and only those, in whom the Holy Spirit has worked the faith . . ."¹ These believers are the elect, that is, those "actually saved,"² by the initiating and predestinating grace of God, and who "without fail . . . enter life eternal."³ It is faith that constitutes the church, a "personal faith in the forgiveness of sins which was purchased by Christ's satisfactio vicaria and is proclaimed and dispensed in the Gospel (which) makes one a member of the Christian Church."⁴ Because this faith is invisible and known only to God, the true church is invisible, and any description which speaks of the church in terms of its visibility "confuses the marks of the Church (notae ecclesiae) with the Church proper."⁵

The word church is also used to designate the outward

¹Ibid., III, p. 397.

²Ibid., p. 479.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 377.

⁵Ibid., p. 409.

organization of people who confess the Christian faith and receive the sacraments, but this is using the word in its improper sense, for the "true" church is not an organization. The presence of the "true" church may be detected by the outward signs of such a visible fellowship, but its true nature must be considered divine and not human, even though the church consists of human individuals.

In contrast to any kind of "human" community, the church is a "spiritual" kingdom.¹ Christians are in a "spiritual body, a spiritual house of living stones," the branch of an olive tree "in a spiritual sense," the "assembly of the sons of God," that is, the elect.² The church is the "pious believing Christians," but it is these Christians, "assembled in the spirit."³ Christiani sunt ecclesia, but they are the church only "in their faith," on their divine "side," and even though this spiritual membership is reflected in their human "side," it is not this human manifestation which is the church itself.

The "true" church is universal. It encompasses all those who possess faith, wherever they may be on the globe and whatever outward church, if any, may regard them as members. The church is the total number of the elect. It is nothing more than the sum of individuals who have been grasped by the grace of God. When the Christian professes in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the holy catholic church," he means this divine and invisible assembly of the elect.

¹ Ibid., p. 401.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 400.

This position can be further explained in a discussion of the constitutive factor, the hedges around faith and the attributes of the church.

1. The constitutive factor

That which makes the church the church is faith, the supernatural faith created by supernatural grace. It is only this kind of faith which establishes membership in the church. Neither holding membership in a church body, nor the outward use of the sacraments, nor public confession of faith, nor zeal for a moral life, nor any mystical or emotional experience apart from the possession of faith is any criterion of "true" church membership. Nothing but the absence of faith separates the individual from the church. Excommunication does not separate if faith is present; false doctrines held in ignorance cannot blot out grace although they are extremely dangerous; the lack of baptism through lack of opportunity is not absolute separation. This factor of faith is so absolute that even the relationship of the Christians to each other is of little importance. The relationship to God is all important. The emphasis is not upon the "assembly" of the elect, but upon the individual elected. It is not the "communion" of believers which is the church's "true" nature but the individual believer's faith that constitutes the church.

2. The hedges around faith

Even though this invisible, spiritual entity called faith, and only this, establishes the church, there must be safeguards of a more tangible nature. Even though only God

knows the heart and thus where the church is, man can assuredly know where the church is not. Faith can be hedged about with the strong walls of pure doctrine which help keep the faith though they do not produce it. For example, there is no church where the satisfactio vicaria Christi is denied. Thus all Socinians, rationalists and even positive theologians such as J. C. K. von Hofmann and the Erlangen school who deny this particular view of the atonement also thereby deny the church.¹ Fortunately, sometimes the hearts of these heretics repudiate their own theology but it is clear that wherever the objective atonement is actually absent, there is no church.

Further, there can be no church without the means of grace, properly understood. "All who join Zwingli and Calvin in teaching that the Holy Spirit needs no vehicle for the revelation and operation of His grace and that the operation of saving grace positively takes place without means of grace or alongside them thereby completely give up the Christian Church."² This dictum includes also the "experience theologians," that is, the enthusiasts and pietists who deny or depreciate the sacraments.

Those at the opposite extreme, who deny the necessity of faith as the means of appropriating the benefits of the sacraments and adopt the principle of ex opere operato as the Roman Catholics do have also abandoned the church. The church

¹ Ibid., p. 403.

² Ibid., p. 406.

can exist under those circumstances only in the individuals who, despite an intellectual ignorance, cling to the grace of Christ. Further, any reliance upon ethical accomplishments or the merits of free will or in any conception of faith which does not give the full credit to the Holy Spirit must, ipso facto, be a denial of the church.

3. The attributes of the church

What characteristics or attributes can then be assigned to the church? The Missourians adopt the Nicene Creed's formula of one, holy, catholic and apostolic but add one of their own, invisibility, which they place first.¹

The church is invisible because faith is invisible. All who declare the church to be visible or semi-visible or visible and invisible pervert the nature of the church. The marks of the church, such as the sacraments, must never be confused with the church itself. There is no way man can know where the church is or which person is a member. Even though the church is created by and sustained through the means of grace, this does not mean that they are "parts" of the church. Rather, the sacraments are only signs that the church could be present, for the means of creating it are present.

The church is one because all its members believe the same thing.² There can be no variation in the essential doctrines of the faith. The unity of the church consists in the

¹Ibid., p. 408.

²Ibid., p. 410.

unity of belief, that is, in the doctrine of the gospel as revealed in the Bible. Pure doctrine thus becomes an attribute of the nature of the church.

The church is holy because Christ has imputed His perfect righteousness into His elect. They possess perfect righteousness as a gift and also a true though yet imperfect righteousness of their own as a result of faith.¹ On their "faith" side they have perfect righteousness, on their "human" side, they have in this life only an imperfect righteousness.

The church is catholic because it consists of all believers everywhere. There has been no change in the church's character in all the ages. All Christians are therefore in one accord in their doctrine and faith, though they may have lived in quite different times and places. The church is by the same token apostolic for it has preserved perfect and inviolate the apostolic doctrine, that is, the doctrine taught by the apostles.²

The Particular Church

The relation of the local church to the universal church is not that of difference in kind but only that of number and locus of authority, in the Pieper view. The universal church is the total number of the local groups plus believers who are not members of any local assembly. The local organization is the locus of the church's authority and the medium of the dispensation of grace. It is a divine institution ordained by

¹ Ibid.,

² Ibid.

God.¹ Christians are required by divine mandate to form themselves into congregations, which in the most proper sense are the visible aspects of the true church. The church is the elect who assemble into congregations.

1. The nature of the congregation

The true congregation consists only of believers as did the universal church. This congregation exists for the purpose of administering the sacraments, proclaiming the gospel, supervising the teaching ministry, and practicing discipline. "The congregation is the assembly of believers who congregate about Word and Sacrament at a particular place."²

The union of congregations into a larger church organization is not a divine mandate. If congregations wish to do so, they have the right to organize themselves into synods or church bodies, but it is neither commanded nor necessary. It is a human arrangement justified only by convenience.

The center of the congregation is the gospel. It is the instrument employed to gather and preserve the assembly. Christians are organs (causa instrumentalis) for the church only insofar as they proclaim the gospel.³

The congregation is independent of every kind of outside control. Synods can only recommend. No man, either from the state or within the church structure, has any power inherent in any office. Consequently, there need be no relations

¹Ibid., p. 420.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 416.

between the church and the world around it and certainly not with any governmental authority.

2. The means of grace

God has ordained means by which He gives men an assurance of His gracious will. They are called means of grace, or sacraments and number three--the gospel, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.¹ A twofold power adheres to these media, an exhibiting or conferring power and an efficacious or operative power. They offer men forgiveness as well as create and strengthen faith. All three confer the same forgiveness.

"Baptism is a divine ordinance in force to the Last Day."² As such, it acquires the authority of a divine statutory order. The mode of baptism does not matter, but its necessity is clear. God has commanded it. Nevertheless, since grace is available through the Word as well, baptism cannot be regarded as absolute.³ Any neglect, however, can only be due to ignorance or extreme inopportunity. The purpose of baptism is to justify, that is, to create faith.⁴ Baptism forgives sins and regenerates the recipient, whether he be child or adult. For Pieper, this excludes the use of the term "symbol" for baptism which, to him, is a denial of its saving reality.

The Lord's Supper is, in a similar way, a divine ordinance. Like the preaching of the gospel and baptism, it is

¹ Ibid., p. 103.

² Ibid., p. 253.

³ Ibid., p. 280.

⁴ Ibid., p. 263.

a medium of subjective justification. However, there is a differentia specifica. For here the recipient receives the very body and blood of Christ. This is an additional blessing incapable of any description. The transsubstantialism of Roman Catholicism is denied as a rationalistic concession to the mode of the transmittal of the body and blood. The Calvinists and Zwinglians are lumped together as denying the real presence although they use the term.¹ Pieper employs the traditional Lutheran term unio sacramentalis as properly descriptive of the sacrament. The body and blood are received together with the bread and wine, united in a supernatural way. There can be no interpretation which uses terms such as "the entire Christ," "Christ's personality," or even the "glorified body."² It is rather the "real" body and blood in, with and under the elements, received in a supernatural manner. This idea is incomprehensible to Pieper, but it is demanded by the literal words of the Bible.

3. The representative church

Christ is the lord of the church and its only authority, as revealed in the words of the Bible. There is, however, a divine mandate for the government of the church. Pieper again adopts the language of the old orthodoxy in calling this the representative church.³

Christ has commissioned neither a person nor a group

¹ Ibid., pp. 299ff.

² Ibid., pp. 355ff.

³ Ibid., p. 427.

of persons to bind the conscience of the church. The church may elect representatives to carry out its wishes, but they have no authority in themselves outside of advisory powers. The church is a pure democracy of the town meeting variety. Every individual Christian has the responsibility of the church and the right to govern it.¹ It is the congregational meeting in which all judicial and administrative powers reside.

The congregation has the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers.² The minister is the servant of the public, that is, the whole congregation, so the term the "public ministry" is used. This in no way denies the priesthood of all Christians but rather enhances it, for the pastor becomes the example of every Christian's responsibility.

Because the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are divine commands, the office of the ministry assumes the character of a divine institution.³ This does not elevate the pastor to any special spiritual order although his office may be called the highest in the church. Indeed the venom against the wrong conception of the ministry is directed at the Papacy by calling the Pope the antichrist.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 428.

² Ibid., p. 439.

³ Ibid., p. 443.

⁴ Ibid., p. 462.

The Church and the World

The exclusivism which results from the foregoing views is without parallel in Christendom, with the possible exception of Roman Catholicism. The separation from the government, society, and other churches is treated as absolute Biblical teaching and is complete in every respect. Other Lutherans are not excepted from the judgment here entailed.

1. The two classes of churches

Congregations and church bodies are neatly divided into two kinds or classes. There are orthodox and heterodox churches. The criterion for judgment is the absolute doctrine hitherto described and is based on divine order. A congregation which abides by God's command and teaches the divine revelation in its purity and administers the sacraments according to their divine institution is an orthodox church, that is, a "true" church. By the same token, a congregation which tolerates false doctrine in its midst is a heterodox or false church.

The distinction must be based upon two practical judgments. First, the public or official doctrine must conform. As a consequence, those churches which have no confessions or creeds exhibiting their doctrinal position must be called heterodox. The possession of the correct doctrine is not enough, however. The official doctrine must be actually taught in the pulpits and the church's literature and believed by its people without reservation. A church may, therefore, be correct in its official pronouncements but still fail the test of orthodoxy because of the actual sit-

uation within its constituency. The occasional and casual intrusion of false doctrine can be tolerated, for the church is always subject to temptation. In such cases the orthodox church will combat and remove the false doctrine, tolerating it only for a time and only while working for its removal.

This does not mean that there are no Christians in heterodox churches. The maxim "outside the Church there is no salvation," applies to the church in its proper sense, the invisible church, and Christians may exist under any ecclesiastical banner, unknown to any human observer. Nor does this necessarily mean that any particular church, as, for example, the Missouri Synod, is the only true church. The Missouri Synod is not identical with the church of God, but it is a "true" church for it is faithful to the doctrine of the absolute religion.

2. Unionism

The consequences of this attitude, when applied to fellowship between church bodies, are clear enough. Fellowship, or indeed any relationships whatsoever in the religious life, between heterodox and orthodox churches is forbidden by God and is anathematized as "unionism." Christian love cannot be used to demand such practices. Love for the brethren requires the practice of pointing out all matters contrary to the Bible. In any case, the Christian is obliged first to obey God. Error can never be given the respectability of truth.

The term "schism" is used to describe divisions in the

church which are not caused by important issues. When men for selfish and sinful reasons divide the church because of disagreements about church customs, orders of worship, or other adiaphora not related to fundamental doctrine, the result is a schism. Christians may disagree about such matters and remain in fellowship without being charged with unionism.

The practical result of this attitude is that the loyal clergy of the Missouri Synod cannot mingle with other churchmen in even the slightest degree. They cannot, for example, be on a public platform where any religious act such as prayer is performed by a non-Missourian. More broadly, it separates the churches of the Synodical Conference in the United States from all other American Lutherans and from the bulk of Lutheranism in the Lutheran World Federation.

3. The church and the state

The state and the church cannot be co-mingled. Civil power cannot be used to advance the building of the church, although it ought to insure the freedom of the church to operate. The state is governed by reason, that is, common sense, and cannot tolerate the interference of the church in its proper business.¹ Whatever relationship a Christian may have with the state is confined to his role as a citizen, which is outside his life as a Christian.

The church, therefore, has no business advocating any particular form of civil government. Neither democracy nor oligarchy nor monarchy can be given the church's bles-

¹ Ibid., p. 418.

sing.¹ The church simply acknowledges the existing state as God's order. The Christian is obliged to obey the existing order at every point except in those particulars in which a clear disobedience to God is implied, and here he must resist.

A Supernaturalistic Concept

We can term Francis Pieper's concept of the church basically supernaturalistic. It is not implied that the other concepts of Lutheranism do not have supernaturalistic motifs. Of course each one does, for the activity of God is always stressed. The element of the divine is not absent in any one of them. However, repristination theology has defined the church in such a way that only the supernatural aspects assume any validity for them. The Word of God is conceived as equated with a divine book which is summarized in a divine doctrine. Both are absolute and perfect, devoid of any human aspect. Faith is understood as an altogether divine gift, without any human attributes whatsoever except that of possession by the individual. Faith itself, however, is of divine nature, completely supernatural. The church, too, following in quite logical sequence, is a perfect, absolute, and thus a supernatural reality, and only a supernatural reality. It is simply the addition of the souls of the elect and is constituted by the divine faith. The church is invisible because things spiritual and supernatural are not seen by the physical eye. Only the marks of the church are visible, but these do not constitute the church in itself.

¹Ibid., p. 417.

It is obvious that this concept of the church is a kind of idealism. The ideal is the real. That which lies behind that which is seen is the true and the real. The accusation against Luther that he conceived of the church as a Platonic cloudland, an accusation he vehemently denied, seems to have found a more proper target here. The church is correctly defined as the numeros electorum, or the coetus electorum.

CHAPTER IV

GOD'S FAMILY ON EARTH

A Psychological Concept of the Church

The Christian congregation is God's family on earth, the society of all men who by being grafted into Christ stand in a living relationship with one another.¹

--Ole Hallesby on the church

The Pietist Tradition in Lutheranism

This chapter will examine the concept of the church as understood by the pietist tradition in Lutheranism. The term pietism is often used to designate the various phenomena of separatism, legalism, asceticism, mysticism, and quietism. Sometimes pietism refers only to the early reaction against the formalistic orthodoxy of the seventeenth century. Both uses of the word are too narrow. Pietism may indeed degenerate into one or more of the "isms" just mentioned, but this is neither its intent nor an accurate description of its real nature. It is equally incorrect to confine pietism to its original historical manifestation. Pietism in Lutheranism has developed into a sophisticated theological position which, in many ways, is quite different from the rather simple religious movement of Spener and Francke. We shall use the word

¹Ole Hallesby, Den Kristelige Troslaere (2 vols.; Kristiania: Lutherstiftelsen Forlag, 1921) II, p. 494.

to mean the theological position which maintains that man and his religious life are both the proper beginning of and the primary subject of theological inquiry. Whereas the age of orthodoxy had proposed that the objective side of the God-man relationship provided the only proper materials for theology and therefore emphasized God's revelatory truth, pietism holds that the subjective side of the God-man interaction is also necessary to a full understanding of the Christian faith. Indeed, the pietists make the inner experience of the Christian their consuming interest although they do not intend to neglect the objective character of God's acts in history. In adopting a different theological base than Lutheran orthodoxy, pietism does not consider itself any less scientific in its methodology. Quite the contrary, it claims to have a more comprehensive scientific character since it can use the empirical methods of psychology as well as the more limited historical and logical methods of strict orthodoxy.

1. Pietism in its beginnings¹

Pietism in its beginnings was a phenomenon of church life rather than of theology. Although the orthodox church fathers had not always neglected the spiritual life of the church,² there were large areas of the Lutheran territory in the second half of the seventeenth century which had become

¹The classic historical works in the history of pietism are: Heinrich Schmid, Die Geschichte des Pietismus (Nördlingen: Beck, 1863) and Albrecht Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus (3 vols.; Bonn: A. Marcus, 1880-1886).

²Johann Arndt's True Christianity (1606) is considered by pietists to be a true expression of their emphases.

so absorbed in the dogmatic expression of Christianity that the personal aspect of faith and the ethical life were nearly altogether neglected. Philipp Spener (1635-1705) and his principal associate, August Francke (1663-1727), sought to revive the lagging church life through informal devotional meetings (the collegia pietatis), evangelical preaching, Christian literature, and finally through great philanthropic institutions. Individual regeneration was greatly emphasized as well as emotional warmth and a denial of the temptations of the world, such as the theater, card playing, and dancing. Active participation by the layman was encouraged, not only in prayer meetings in the homes and private Bible reading, but also in directing the activities of the mushrooming movement.

Although Spener and Francke considered their efforts to regenerate the church as more a matter of form than content, it was inevitable that the substance of theology should also be affected. Three of the influences on the Lutheran doctrine are of special interest to us in this study: the new method of theological study, the emphasis upon ethics, and the concept of the church.

Orthodoxy had emphasized the importance of the teaching church. Pietism did not quarrel with this per se, but insisted that the teaching church must itself possess living faith, that is, must be regenerate. Scientific knowledge could not displace Christian piety. Those who had knowledge must also believe. Faith must be the basis of knowledge and not vice versa. To bring about this re-orientation of theology, one must begin at the theological seminaries where the

pastors are indoctrinated. The Pietists believed that the surest method of achieving a transformation of the teachers was to change the nature of theological studies. The best way to do this was to return theological education to its original base, the Bible itself. This would automatically focus the attention on awakening and conversion and would bring about a concentration on the practical aims of theology--self-edification and the ability to edify others. The Bible, and especially the New Testament, was pushed to the center of the theological stage, with the Confessions relegated to an inferior role. This was not because the Confessions were rejected, but because the content of the Confessions could be more easily taught and understood when seen in their original context, the Bible. It was the content of the Confessions and not the Confessions as documents the Pietists valued. It was not doctrine itself that was the most important matter, but rather that which doctrine could accomplish--the awakening to faith of the individual hearer of the doctrine.

This awakening could not stop at the point of the coming to faith of the individual. It must be completed by producing a moral life consistent with the Christian view. The sanctification of life must be the chief and the earnest labor of the Christian. Whereas orthodoxy had been tempted to concentrate its energies on the problems around Christian certainty, the Pietists insisted on an emphasis upon the renewal of life which came with the reception of faith. Ethics assumed a new role in Lutheran theology with this shift in interest.

These two new approaches to theology resulted in a different understanding of the church. The church was the living believers to the early Pietists. While it remained true that only God can see the heart of man and therefore one can speak of an invisible church, it is of greater importance to emphasize that the church is the community which exhibits the fruits of faith, fruits which are quite visible. If the results of faith are not seen in the ethical life of the individual believer, something is wrong with that faith. It is not "true" faith and needs vitalizing. Moreover this new life of faith is specifically related to the work of the church, especially to the work of evangelism in the local scene and foreign missions. The priesthood of believers must be taken seriously. This means that every layman should be burdened with the responsibilities of the ordained pastor, and the great abyss separating the clergy and the laity must be bridged. It does not follow that the layman should take over the functions of the ordained ministry, but it does require the layman to assume the responsibility not only of showing in his own life the effects of faith but of exercising his own priestly office by edifying others both in the church and in daily life among the people as well. The relationships between a Christian and his brother are just as important a part of the life of the church as doctrine, indeed, if one must choose, more important. The communal aspect of the church was thus greatly emphasized and cultivated. The church, the Pietists taught, is that community which actually exists in and among the believers and is neither an ecclesiastical institution nor an

invisible "cloudland."

2. The development of Pietism

Pietism did not enjoy the long reign of strict orthodoxy in Lutheranism. It began to degenerate soon after the death of Francke in 1727, especially in northern Germany, which had been its strongest area. Many of the Pietists were enticed by the period of rationalism which followed. Those who tried to maintain the original vitality of Pietism were often devoid of any real vigor and retained only a stereotyped pious terminology and a piety which was largely an external discipline.

Despite its short-lived dominance, Pietism had posed the question of objectivity and subjectivity with such force that it could not be ignored. The discussion of this very important problem passed out of the hands of the church leaders and became the chief philosophical interest in Germany for the next one hundred fifty years. Theology was profoundly influenced by the progress of the debate. The subjective side of the controversy reached its climax in the philosophies of Kant and Fichte with the denial of any possible knowledge of the objective being of God. God was considered the regulating principle of reason. All that we can know of God we know from an analysis of ourselves.

The possibility of an intrinsic relation between the objective and the subjective was raised by Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher. It is especially to Schleiermacher, the Reformed theologian, that present day pietism owes so much. Schleiermacher took the somewhat vague feelings of original

pietism and with the tools provided him by the philosophical debates of the eighteenth century, erected a theological edifice which retained the essential features of subjectivity but at the same time brought about a synthesis of the subjective and the objective sides of Christian thought. This was managed by maintaining the psychological and the historical motifs of Christianity in juxtaposition. The main theme of his system was religious consciousness as such. Faith he understood as man's experience. But, as a correlate to this human experience is the divine agency. Supernaturalism is correct in its assumption that man, in facing his most difficult problems, does not stand entirely upon his own resources. These two motifs are not opposites, however. Mediation between them is possible and indeed necessary. Historical knowledge is a mode of cognition even though it is different from the more primary one of psychological knowledge. Schleiermacher was able to restore faith, the material principle of the Reformation, to the post of honor in theology, maintaining its independence, on the one hand, from a mere historical faith and, on the other, from the conclusions and persuasions of reason.

This theological orientation naturally stresses the individual, his rights and independence, but Schleiermacher at the same time had a vigorous feeling for the association of Christians and maintained with great power and energy the idea of the church as community. There was a combination, not only of the psychological and the historical, but also of the religious and the ethical, and the individual and community.

Schleiermacher's great influence in Lutheranism was fostered by the school of mediating theology in the nineteenth century.¹ Of interest to us in this chapter, however, is the influence he exerted on the Erlangen school of theology, which was the forerunner of the pietism of the twentieth century.² Although Erlangen theology is not usually considered "pietist" in the general use of the word, it can be labeled so in our usage of the term because of its great emphasis upon religious experience and its subsequent influence on Ole Hallesby, whose position we shall describe. The Erlangen school was also a part of the confessional revival in Germany in the last century, and is usually contrasted with the type of confessionalism represented by the repristination theologians. The Erlangen position can be best described by reference to its attitude toward the Bible, the Confessions, religious experience, and the church.

The new attitude toward the Bible and the Confessions must be understood against the background of a dynamic view of history.³ Hofmann maintained that revelation is accomplished by historical events whose meaning is disclosed by the spoken and written word. The Bible is history, not doctrine. It is heilsgeschichte, a salvation history through which God speaks. The Bible must therefore be understood as a whole, that is, within the context of its historical develop-

¹Supra, p. 58.

²Supra, p. 57.

³See J. C. K. von Hofmann, trans. Christian Preus, Interpreting the Bible (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959).

ment, and not piecemeal, verse by verse, or even idea by idea. The results of Biblical criticism do not undermine the authority of the Bible. There may be errors in the text of the Bible without in any way disturbing the event behind those words which is the real bearer of the revelation. In somewhat the same way, the Confessions must be understood in their historical context and not interpreted literally as a new source of doctrine. The Confessions are a part of the history of the church. They are facts in that history and therefore assume authority because of their place in the redemptive history. Christianity has an independent existence because its authority comes from this independent history.

At the same time, the experience of regeneration in the individual is an independent source of knowledge of Christianity. F. H. R. Frank, Hofmann's colleague, was particularly interested in this concept. Just as natural science uses the principle of causality in observing phenomena and arguing back to their efficient causes, so theology should pursue a similar method and begin with the facts of the new spiritual life and argue back to its causes. In his important work System of the Christian Certainty,¹ Frank begins with a universal psychological definition of the nature of certainty: "Certainty is the becoming sensible of the harmony of the being with the notion, or of experience with knowledge." Certainty is understood as the condition of the subject which at the same time is related to the object. Christian certainty has the same

¹F. H. R. Frank, trans. Maurice J. Evans, System of the Christian Certainty (2nd ed. rev.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), p. 74.

formal character but is distinguished from certainty in the general sense by its peculiar moral orientation which includes regeneration and conversion. Regeneration and conversion are dogmatic terms for moral transformation. A new ego is the result of the religious experience, and this ego asserts itself as the determining factor of a new ethical existence. Regeneration is that part of the transformation which is "objective," that is, caused by external factors; conversion is that part which refers to the role man himself plays in his own transformation.

As regards the concept of the church, the Erlangen school took a position quite different from the repristination school, just as it did with the Bible and the Confessions. Hoefling rejected what he called the "manifestly Romanizing hierarchical" position of the repristination school.¹ No external legal form could be considered part of the essence of the church. The church must be thought of in terms of the believers themselves in relation to the active instruments, the Word and the sacraments, which create their community. The Erlangen school thus combined the idea of religious fellowship in original pietism with a reinforced idea of the place of the sacraments. The Word and sacraments were viewed dynamically, however, in contradistinction to the orthodoxists who tended to think of the sacraments in absolute terms. This idea will reappear in the neo-Lutheran movement to be discussed in Chapter VI.

¹Neve, *op. cit.*, II, p. 131. Neve quotes from Hoefling's Grundsätze evangelisch-lutherischer Kirchenverfassung of 1850.

3. The influence of Pietism in contemporary Lutheranism

Pietism, in the sense of our definition as a theological method as well as pietism in the more general sense of a way of Christian living, plays a large role in contemporary Lutheranism. More fluid than orthodoxy, it expresses itself in a variety of ways in contemporary church life and is therefore not easily subject to analysis. Nevertheless, its main characteristics are plainly seen in large areas of Lutheranism. Pietism cannot be considered the dominant image of German church life, although it retains a broad and substantial base among the laity of large sections of the German churches. The territorial church of Wurtemberg, as an example, is generally considered a center of the pietist influence. The chief strength is in Norway and Finland, where it can be called the religion of the people, even though this image is sometimes obscured by somewhat different attitudes by leading churchmen and officers of the national church. Finland, whose national church is more active than Norway's, is almost wholly pietist in its emphasis, even in the leadership of the church. The situation in Norway is somewhat ambiguous, but it is safe to say that if one considers only that element of the nation that maintains an active and close relationship to religious living, that is, worshipping on Sunday, reading the Bible, and generally assuming the name and character of the Christian, pietism would be the overwhelming sentiment. This has been true since the early nineteenth century and the influence of lay leader Hans Nielsen Hauge. The views of the state church

bishops do not wholly correspond to this judgment. The possibility of this situation can be more clearly seen after our discussion of Hallesby in the next section.

Pietism is still an important factor in the religious life of rural Sweden, especially in southern and western parts of the country. The province of Gothenberg, where the leadership is in the hands of Bishop Bo Giertz, is generally acknowledged as solidly pietistic in its church life. This judgment again must be tempered by recognition of the fact that it is not made about the nation as a whole but concerns those actively engaged in a religious life connected with organized church life. Pietism is less prevalent in Denmark, where the Grundtvigian influence is still the most important influence.

In the United States the Lutheran churches of Scandinavian origin have pietism as their chief although diminishing characteristic. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the most important exponent of pietism, although this emphasis is combined with an orthodox view of the Bible and the Confessions in many instances. The Lutheran Free Church (about 50,000 members) is the avowed pietist Lutheran church, but its influence is small. The Augustana Lutheran Church also has some strong pietist elements in it. American Lutherans of German origin do not reflect the same image of their homeland as do the Scandinavians. Those associated with the churches of the Synodical Conference, as we have seen, reject this influence emphatically. The United Lutheran Church in America shows only a minor disposition toward pietism, even though it has been influenced strongly by the Erlangen

school. It has borrowed from the Erlangen theologians mainly their attitudes toward the Bible and the Confessions and to a much lesser degree their emphasis upon religious experience. Other contemporary influences are more prominent in this largest Lutheran church in America.

Because contemporary pietism retains one aspect of original pietism, that is, the characteristic of the religious life in the home and the congregation and to a lesser degree the theological science of the classroom, judgments about its significance in the Lutheran church of today must be left somewhat vague. Despite this, it can be said without question that orthodoxy in its repristination form and pietism are the twin chief influences and characteristics of Lutheranism. Sometimes at great odds and at other times wedded in strange marriages, these two interpretations of the Lutheran heritage have created the main Lutheran attitudes, at least until the second half of the twentieth century.

4. Ole Hallesby

The most influential theological spokesman for pietism in Lutheranism in this century is Ole Hallesby (1879-), former professor and dean at Menighetsfakultetet (The Free Theological Faculty) in Oslo, Norway.¹ A theologian, church statesman, author, and evangelist, Hallesby dominated church life in Norway for more than thirty years. As a popular pro-

¹No biography of Hallesby is available. A short article on his life appears in Norsk Biografisk Leksikon, ed. Edv. Bull and Einar Jensen (13 vols.; Oslo: H. Aschehoug and Co., 1931), V, pp. 261-264.

fessor of dogmatics (now retired), he was the teacher of most of the clergy of Norway. As a prolific writer of books for the laity, he is well known not only all over Norway but also in the pietist circles in the United States, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, through the translation of a series of monographs.¹ He is, without a doubt, the most widely read theologian in Norway in this century. His activities are not limited to a professor's study. A leader for a quarter of a century in Det Norske Lutherske Indremissionsselskab (The Norwegian Lutheran Innermission Society), a strong movement of laymen, he is a popular lecturer at conferences for university students and lay leaders. He was the founder and first president of the Norges Kristelige Studentlag (The Norwegian Christian Student Association), which organized in 1924 in order to oppose the liberal Studentenforbundet (Student Union).

Hallesby's most ambitious work is his dogmatics in two volumes entitled Den Kristelige Troslaere, literally the "Christian Faith-teaching." A scholarly work in every respect, it displays a good knowledge of the history of thought and argues a well integrated and consistent theological position. Because of a lack of translation, the work is little known outside of Norway, but its influence has been very great. Not only was it the only dogmatics textbook used at the Free Faculty for more than a generation, but it became the basis

¹Translated by C. J. Carlsen and published by Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, the most influential of these are: Prayer (1934), Why I am a Christian (1930), Religious or Christian (1939), Conscience (1934), Under His Wings (1933).

for the courses in dogmatics in several American Lutheran seminaries. It will be the principal primary source for this study.

Hallesby's activities were largely directed against the liberal theology taught at the state theological faculty of the University of Oslo until about 1930. The Free Faculty was founded in 1908 to train pastors for the Church of Norway following the development of strong dissatisfaction with the University-trained graduates in the church. Although privately supported, in contrast to the state support of the University, the Free Faculty graduated many more candidates for ordination than their rival school and thus was able to fill a majority of the pulpits in Norway.

Hallesby called his own position "positive theology." He viewed the liberal theology at the University as a purely scientific endeavor based only upon reason and the senses. He described his own endeavor as a theologia regenitorum which built a theology based upon an understanding of God gained through his own experience of regeneration and conversion.¹ He was convinced that positive and liberal theology were two different faiths, indeed two religions, one true and the other false. He thought of himself as engaged in a battle for the survival of Christianity. The situation in which he worked was therefore quite different from that of early German pietism which revolted against Lutheran scholasticism, although both he and his eighteenth century church fathers considered

¹Hallesby, Troslaere, op. cit., I, p. 27. Hereafter we shall refer to Troslaere when quoting from this Hallesby work.

their adversaries to be intellectualists. Hallesby is willing to use the seventeenth century orthodoxists as his allies whenever he can, although he does not agree with many of their positions and does not hesitate to say so. His theological milieu is very much like that of the Erlangen school in the nineteenth century, of which he is an avowed disciple.

The Erlangen school did not really teach Hallesby anything new. He was a student at Erlangen University from 1908-1909, and there is a stream of footnotes in the Troslaere acknowledging his indebtedness to his German teachers. What he received, however, was mainly a theological affirmation of that which he had already learned from his own conversion and from the mainstream of Norwegian Lutheranism, extending back to the awakening in Norway under the leadership of the lay evangelist Hans Nielsen Hauge.¹ Gisle Johnson, professor at the University Faculty in the mid-nineteenth century before the liberal intrusion into that Faculty, had combined orthodoxy and Pietism in such a way as to clothe the Haugean Puritanism with a respectable Lutheran garb and yet accentuate the earlier revivalism.² Hallesby thought that he found in the Erlangen view a respectable theological basis for his ideas on religious experience and at the same time enough approval of the Lutheran Confessions to consider himself firmly in the Lutheran tradition or, in fact, the most

¹ Joseph Shaw, Pulpit under the Sky (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1955). This is the most current biography of Hauge in English.

² Einar Molland, Church Life in Norway, trans. Harris Kaasa (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1956), pp. 1-66.

proper interpreter of the Reformation.

Hallesby takes great pains to point out his adherence to the Confessions, but on numerous occasions also explains that others have interpreted the Confessions incorrectly. He would consider his own understanding as being closer to the spirit of Luther. Luther, for Hallesby, is a great church father of the faith and as such an important theologian, but he is equally a brother who has the same experience of faith. It is this shared experience of conversion that is of greater interest to Hallesby.

Hallesby is aware of Schleiermacher's position in the history of doctrine, although he does not seem to realize the enormous debt of the Erlangen school to the great Reformed theologian. Soren Kierkegaard's influence can be noted here and there also. Hallesby warmly refers to him and agrees with what he calls the Dane's basic thought, namely, that the offense of the gospel and its paradoxical character calls for a decision in the face of the intellectual impossibilities.¹ It would be a mistake, however, to say that Hallesby is more than casually interested in Kierkegaard's thought.

With this brief introduction to pietism in Lutheranism, and more especially to Hallesby's place in it, it is possible to turn to a more detailed analysis of Hallesby's understanding of Christianity and his concept of the church.

¹Troslaere, I, p. 85.

The Christian Faith and the
Basis of Theology

For Hallesby, theology is the search of the Christian church for a scientific comprehension of the reality of the life revealed in Christ.¹ As the queen of the sciences, theology has the right to establish her own methods and define her own limits. Profane science recognizes two planes of reality, nature and human life (naturliv og personliv).² The Christian church teaches that there are three planes of reality: the world of nature, the world of the mind or the self, and the supernatural world. Three faculties in man correspond to these three levels of reality: that is, man possesses the means to comprehend these realities in ways that parallel their ascendancy. Through his five senses, man knows of the nature world. Through his "humanness" (personevnen) man is made aware of the world of his own self. In the most profound comprehension of all, through the category of faith, the supernatural reality is opened to man. The supernatural is that level of reality which is the unique province of theology. The research into this reality is what distinguishes theology from all profane science and puts the theological enterprise on a level above all other scientific inquiry.

The Christian knows of the supernatural through experience, therefore, just as man knows of any reality through his own experience. Any reality is only open to investigation when it has been experienced, and it can be investigated

¹ Troslaere, I, p. 9.

² Ibid., I, p. 22.

only by those who have had the experience. With this epistemological presupposition, Hallesby can insist that the theologian must be given the right to investigate his own experience of the supernatural according to the terms dictated by those same experiences. This may mean freedom from the limits of the scientific methods which may fruitfully govern the research into the lower planes of reality, although it also permits the use of any scientific result into any reality in the theological inquiry.¹ Theology is therefore a human enterprise. It is not itself divine even though it investigates the divine. It is an attempt at comprehension, a quest, and not necessarily the confirmed result of inquiry.

Hallesby is, in the strictest sense, an erfahrung theologian. Experience is for him the key to all knowledge. Experience of the supernatural is the key to all theological knowledge.

With this established, we must assess three other topics in order to understand the point from which he views the church, namely, the approach to the theological problem, the nature of God, and the relation of God to history.

1. The approach to the theological problem

The approach to the theological problem always concerns itself with two sources, according to Hallesby. They can be called the objective and the subjective sources. The objective source is revelation and has two forms, natural and

¹Ole Hallesby, The Main Difference between Positive and Liberal Theology (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1923), p. 23.

supernatural revelation. Natural revelation is a presupposition (forutsaetning) for the Christian faith because it establishes the psychological foundation and the historical preparation for the supernatural revelation.¹ It behooves the theologian to investigate the world around him using every ordinary scientific tool. Hallesby is convinced that this can only prove that man is incomplete and abnormal in his natural setting. Natural man, that is, man without an experience of God, is his own biggest problem, for he is not the man God intended him to be. He is a sinner. Any kind of evidence from any source properly evaluated establishes this. Man is in constant strife with the world around him as well as with the psychological laws (personlivets love) in himself. The function of this natural revelation is to show man's need for further revelation.

In supernatural revelation, still objective in character because it comes from outside man, God reveals himself as the saviour of man from his predicament. This revelation took place in an historical process over centuries and reached its climax in the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. The end of the process occurred at the coming of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Jesus and the establishment of a written Word.² This Word is the Bible, which is the objective source of knowledge for this supernatural revelation. This does not mean that the Bible is an infallible book. Hallesby spends pages in considering the problems of the discrep-

¹Troslaere, I, p. 37.

²Ibid., p. 44.

ancies in the Bible, and rejects emphatically any idea of a verbal inspiration.¹ The inspiration of the Bible, he says, is personal, that is, the writers were inspired, and in reading what they wrote we too can become inspired, receiving God's message quite apart from any artificial construction of the logical infallibility of the human words.²

Whereas the natural revelation only exhibits man's need, supernatural revelation has the power to produce the reborn (gjenfødte) man. In choosing to heed it and submit to its power, the man who is confronted with supernatural revelation may enter into a new life with its comprehension of a whole new reality. Without this decision to submit to the power of revelation the purpose of both natural and supernatural revelation is lost and indeed unknown. The relation between the experience in natural man, leading to his rebirth, and the objective revelation is at its deepest level a paradox without solution. It is clear nevertheless to Hallesby that there is no supernatural revelation without man's experience witnessing to it.³

The faith of the Christian, the subjective source of theology, is the certainty of having met God himself in Jesus Christ and through Him becoming free of sin and guilt, thus entering into a new life with God and participating in the supernatural reality.⁴ This experience certainly must rest

¹ Ibid., p. 182.

² Ibid., p. 187.

³ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

upon the certainty of an historical revelation and can never be separated from it. Further, this experience can only come through the established channels of the church and its means of grace.¹ But the final validity of religion comes with the knowledge which is born out of a personal encounter with God. This proves that Christianity is the only religion for which man is made and which answers man's problem. The central emphasis in Hallesby is put therefore upon the acceptance by man of God's revelation.²

2. The nature of God

The Christian experience is a God experience.³ This experience comes about when man is confronted with the supernatural revelation. God speaks through this revelation, that is, through the Bible to man and reveals himself as a person. It is this knowledge that distinguishes Christianity from all heathen religions and philosophical speculations, and is the deepest and most central knowledge of God.⁴ To believe in God is to believe in a person and to establish a relationship with another self. To experience God is simply to get to know Him as another person.

The proof for this quality of God is the revelation through Christ, a person. The revelation of God in the life of Jesus of Nazareth is not concerned primarily with concepts,

¹Ibid., p. 152.

²Ibid., p. 102.

³Ibid., II, p. 9.

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

with ideas, or even with knowledge, but with the unveiling of the attitudes of a personal God--the attitudes of judgment and love.

God is not just another person, not one person among many. He is "absolute" person, His qualities and attitudes are absolute. His knowledge and His power are absolute. Even His emotional nature (følelsesliv) is absolute, that is, it is complete and without disharmony or need.¹

The most important aspects of the person of God are His self-determination and self-consciousness. Will is the chief category in the definition of person. Being absolute person God possesses absolute freedom in the use of His will. This freedom, however, is "ethical."² God always wills the good. God is, therefore, according to Hallesby, "practical." Any knowledge of God touches upon the practical life of man, that is, on the ethical life, both in the individual and in the community.³ It is clear for Hallesby that any relationship with God is based on a relationship between the wills of God and the individual. It follows that the relationship is proper only when the wills are in harmony and when this harmony is achieved in freedom.

3. God and history

God has a plan, a plan conceived in eternity but car-

¹Ibid., p. 30.

²Ibid., p. 22.

³Ibid., p. 12.

ried out in history. The plan is to bring a rebellious mankind back into His kingdom. The goal of history is the realization of God's will on earth as it is in heaven.¹ Revelation can be described as the activity of God in history carrying out His plan. The natural world was created by God as the backdrop against which the drama of history would unfold, a drama that gained some excitement when the original plan was thwarted by man's rebellion and a new plan was put into operation, namely, salvation through Jesus Christ.

Man was created for life in God's kingdom, that is, under God's benevolent direction, and it is only in this kingdom that man reflects the image of God fully. The revolt of man against God's plan came about when he chose to make his own will the center of his life instead of yielding his will to God and serving his fellowmen.² This is the meaning of sin--the unwillingness to obey God. The status of disobedient man is so abnormal that it has affected every facet of the life of the whole human race.

God's lordship over history is not absolute. It has a certain elasticity for He is dealing with persons and therefore free men. There can be no fatalism in Christianity.³ Indeed, God's steering of the world (verdensstyre) is governed by the decisions of the individuals for whom the world was created. Man is the object of God's activity. Men must be

¹ Ibid., p. 174.

² Ibid., p. 138.

³ Ibid., p. 189.

enticed to decide for God of their own free will. They hold the key to the success of God's plan.¹ History is the arena in which God works to win man back to allegiance to Him.

The Realization of God's Kingdom in the Individual

If God's kingdom is to be realized, it must be through the co-operation of individual men. God's will cannot be imposed upon men, for this would violate the personality He has given them. Their free decision is necessary. At the same time, men are under such a heavy load of sin and guilt that they cannot exercise their free will, at least by initiating a relationship to God. God had to find a way, says Hallesby, whereby men could freely decide to commit themselves to God and yet understand their own lack of merit. The will of God can be realized only in a context where men choose to obey God without accruing to themselves any credit for the obedience. The "method" which God chose to make this possible is called the way of salvation. An understanding of how Hallesby conceives this way and the psychological process by which it is appropriated by the individual is absolutely necessary as an introduction to his concept of the church.

1. The way of salvation

Because God is just, man must answer for his sin, This happens in several ways: the feeling of guilt which overshadows his life, causing damaging anxiety; the punishment man endures at the hands of an unfriendly world, both bodily and mentally; and eternal punishment after

¹ Ibid., p. 188.

death.¹ Through the experiences of guilt and suffering, man knows that he is spiritually dead and can recognize that the prospect of eternal punishment is inevitable.² The circumstances of the natural state of man are so grave that the whole creation writhes under the feeling of condemnation and the whole life of man, even his bodily processes, is affected.³ The sickness of the soul sickens the body.

This predicament need not continue. Although the human race has condemned itself by refusing to obey God, it can still be saved.⁴ God's plan of salvation in Christ has been designed to save all men. Through the sufferings and death of a savior, Jesus, the possibility of escaping the human dilemma has been established.

Jesus Christ was a true man and at the same time God's eternal son.⁵ His earthly life was identical with the eternal person of God. He was the first realization of God's kingdom because there was no disharmony or conflict with the will of God in His life.⁶ He was the second Adam, the representative of the human race. To get to know Him as a person is to know God and to know, therefore, both one's sin and the savior from it.

¹Ibid., p. 201.

²Ibid., p. 215.

³Ibid., p. 218.

⁴Ibid., p. 220.

⁵Ibid., p. 235.

⁶Ibid., p. 284.

The work of Christ is fully as important as His person. Christ in the act of His highest obedience in consenting to His death actually volunteered to take upon himself the guilt of all men and in His sufferings and death endured the punishment of all men.¹ The barrier of guilt which had blocked the way to God and the necessity for the punishment of men are removed for those who avail themselves of God's forgiveness. This accomplishment by Christ can be termed the "objective redemption," for it took place outside of man. This objective redemption is incomplete by itself, however, and needs its counterpart, the "subjective redemption," that is, the acceptance of man, for its completion.²

2. The psychological process of salvation

The heart of Hallesby's system is the reaction of man to the way of salvation God has provided. Salvation is that event which takes place in man, releasing him from the guilt and power of sin and giving him a new life. It can be analyzed empirically, and such analyses establish a pattern which is typical of every Christian's experience. Four psychological steps invariably take place: the call, conversion, justification, and the holy life.³

The salvation process begins when man receives the "call." Hallesby defines it as "God's creative inner work on the spiritually dead man whereby he is awakened to a sin

¹ Ibid., p. 319.

² Ibid., p. 385.

³ Ibid., p. 405.

consciousness and is placed in the circumstances whereby he is open to salvation to Christ."¹ The old "self-life" (sely-liv) is abandoned and the individual sees his relation to God as broken, and understands for the first time that his life is not achieving its real purpose. This inner call goes to all men and is an expression of God's will to save all men. Any doctrine of election must be understood in this context. The election by God is a reference only to those who open themselves to Christ. It has no meaning outside a setting which includes man's response.

The response, or subjective side to God's call, is an awakening. It follows these general psychological lines.² First, there is a realization by the one called that he stands condemned before God. This understanding leads to the feeling of compulsion to do God's will. At the same time there comes the profound knowledge that he cannot by himself do God's will. The sinner is therefore caught in a terrible dilemma. He feels condemned, but knows that he can do nothing about it. His mental state is one of terror (raedsel) and helplessness. There is a desperate longing for a way out and a willingness to do anything to find relief.

The second step may be called conversion (omvendelsen), literally a "change-about." This is the conscious decision by the individual called to adopt God's plan. It is the choice by which the sinner accepts God's judgment will-

¹ Ibid., p. 406.

² Ibid., p. 411.

ingly and yields to God's way of freeing him from it.

The psychological process has both a negative and a positive side. The negative proceeds in this manner.¹ The individual now wants to make peace with God for his sins and knows that in order to do so he must change his self-motivated life (selvstyrede liv). Still realizing that he cannot do anything himself and gaining the deeper understanding that even his wish for help may itself not be his deepest longing, he is ready to fall upon the mercy of God. This is an advance over the last step of the call, for the individual involved has now abandoned his will power, even that of "doing anything," and is in the proper receptive mood. This side of conversion Hallesby calls the "necessary psychological-ethical condition for Christ to come with his salvation."²

The positive side of the conversion process may be called faith. Now having been given the knowledge that only Christ can save him, the awakened man must decide whether or not to accept this salvation, that is, he must decide if he will no longer continue to resist it, which, despite his terror, he is still actually doing. The decision to surrender the will is the act of faith. It is the decision to trust God for salvation without any pre-conditions, presumably, therefore, without even knowing what the salvation is. Once the decision to trust has been made, faith becomes that for which it decided, that is, the trust itself.

¹Ibid., p. 427.

²Ibid., p. 429.

The third event in the process comes instantaneously with the decision to trust and has two sides. On the one hand, it is justification, which is simply the deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin. On the other, it is the rebirth to a new life, and thus the deliverance from sin's power. In his doctrine of justification, Hallesby stands in the confessional position of forensic justification, that is, that God justifies. Justification is the declarative act in which God pronounces the forgiveness of the converted sinner. God forgives, not because the faith of the sinner merits it, but because the sinner is now able to receive it. Hallesby thus preserves a certain objective character to justification, but at the same time manages to maintain a subjective qualification for it. Justification is not a neutral supernatural act outside of man's knowledge nor an act without cognizance of either its ethical implications or human psychology. God forgives sin because two things have happened. First, an ethical base has been created in the redemption by Christ. God can in good conscience forgive sin despite His absolute justice. Second, the sinner has fully opened himself to this forgiveness of his own volition. God thereby violates neither the demands of justice nor the demands of freedom. Both God's side and the sinner's side have been satisfied as to the ethics of the transaction.¹

All is not finished, however, at this point. The orthodoxists had a tendency to lose interest in whatever might

¹ Ibid., p. 443.

be said about the Christian from this point on. Hallesby insists that justification always has another side, namely, the new life. Justification is always accompanied by an actual moral transformation. The life of love invariably follows justification. The possession of love is not a condition for justification but is rather that quality exhibited by the one who has been declared justified. In the rebirth the individual receives Christ's spirit in his heart and lives from that moment on in a common life (samliv) with God.

This common life with God has an objective and subjective side as well. The reborn man has not only been given a new status with God and possesses a psychological normalcy in his attitude to life, but there is an objective life created in him which is independent of his volition or emotions. Life with God does not consist only in the thoughts about God or in the emotions which accompany these thoughts. The God-life is present when we sleep and when we are far away from Him in our conscious mind. In fact, the life power of the Christian is most securely fastened to the unconscious life. Hallesby accepts the language of depth psychology in distinguishing between the conscious and the unconscious self.¹

It is this reborn person, this new individual, born into God's family on earth, who is a "relative" of all those who have been similarly reborn.

The fourth step in the salvation process is the life lived with the power now granted, the holy life. "The holy

¹Ibid., p. 31.

life is the unfolding of the reborn, newly created self."¹ From the instant of the birth of the new man in him the Christian strives to bring the new life to a fulfillment from the "seed to the fully ripened fruit, from immaturity to full sanctification."² This process is characterized by a daily battle with the old self-life and is a striving for the same life and spirit exhibited in the life of Jesus. The new Christian is fully saved, but not fully grown. Even Jesus himself grew and developed.³

The development of the Christian affects his whole person. All disharmonies and weaknesses gradually disappear. "A spirit filled Christian is a sound, healthy and normal Christian."⁴ Perfection is never attained on this side of the grave for the temptation to slip back into the old self-life is always present. No moment guarantees the future. Therefore, discipline is one of the most important aspects of the Christian life. The Christian must guard himself carefully from every form of temptation. He must be as obedient as was his ideal, Jesus.⁵

The fruits of this common life with God are the service and love shown one's fellowman. The life of love is a witness to the world of his rebirth. This relationship of

¹Ibid., p. 31.

²Ibid., p. 465.

³Ibid., p. 472.

⁴Ibid., p. 478.

⁵Ibid., p. 472.

love to one's fellow Christians brings into being a community called the church.

The Realization of God's Kingdom in the Church

As important as the salvation of the individual is to Hallesby, and its importance can scarcely be over emphasized, it is only a means of attaining the greater goal, God's kingdom. God's plan is to establish a holy people, a society of God-dedicated people. The harmony of the individual soul is a symbol of the harmony which is to permeate society. The saving of the individual is but a preliminary step to the realization of the kingdom which has its first concrete exhibition in the congregation, that is, in the church.¹ The church is conceived as the total number of Christians, that is, actual Christians--those who have experienced the psychological process just described, and not those who are merely baptized or belong to an ecclesiastical institution.

It will be recognized that this idea that the church as the addition of individuals is not unlike the coetus electorum of repristination theology. The differences, however, are very great. Whereas the Missourian view had couched its concept in completely individualistic and objective terms and made the "true" church invisible, Hallesby begins with a subjective basis and expands his understanding to embrace the idea of a community visible in society. Hallesby's view is best de-

¹Hallesby prefers to use the Norwegian menighet, literally translated community, rather than kirke, church, presumably because he does not wish to confuse his concept of the church with the official state Church of Norway. For our purposes, we can translate menighet as church.

scribed by explaining the meaning of the term "living relationship" and his use of the old distinctions of visible and invisible.

1. The essence of the church--
the living relationships

Hallesby claims that the essence of the society of God-dedicated persons is the living relationship which springs up among those who have had the common experience of discovering a living relationship with God. The church is like the members of a family who, having been born into a particular relationship to each other, love and serve one another out of a feeling of mutuality which is automatically a part of their inherited kinship. The church consists of individual Christians, but individuals who stand in a special relationship to one another, a relationship which must be understood as meaning more than the simple addition of individuals. A family is more than a sum of its members, even though it is the members who together make up the family.

A key to interpreting how the church is conceived by Hallesby is his often used phrase "living relationship." He means that the relationships of which he speaks must be "real," or "actual." They are not formal relationships only or the mere indication of status. Something actually passes from one member to the other when a "living" relationship exists. The relationship is alive and can change. It can grow, develop, recede. It must always be in action, producing, reacting, stimulating.

When Hallesby uses the phrase "living relationship"

he is always thinking of it in two senses. First, he thinks of the relationship to God--a relationship which becomes living in the salvation experience. Second, he always includes in the idea the relationship of one Christian to another, an idea which multiplies into a whole system of relationships, and therefore a community. Even though the relationship to God is primary, the relationship to other Christians follows. The two always exist together. Love follows faith. It simply cannot be otherwise. Hallesby speaks of the church as having two dimensions, a vertical one, meaning the commitment to God, and a horizontal one, meaning the love relationship to other Christians.

Hallesby elucidates his meaning in a five-point description. First, negatively, the nature of the relationships in the church is not that of a union around a common aim or ideal. Nor are the relationships born out of any kind of common agreement, such as a doctrinal agreement. Second, positively, there is an inner, organic life that binds the members together into a whole--a common life which is quite apart from the meeting of minds. How a self can be related to another self is quite indescribable. The mysterious quality of being able to unite with another person or a group of persons can be experienced but not understood completely. Third, this inner oneness flows out of the common oneness of the members with Christ. Christians are like branches of a vine--branches which have all been grafted into a common stem. Because the individuals have been "put into Christ's life," they are by this very fact in "living" union with one another.

Because Christians are children of the same father, they are siblings of one another and therefore a family.¹

It is clear to Hallesby that the church is the church because of the common possession of a God-given life. Neither the means of grace nor their administration makes the church the church. These presuppose a living church. The church is neither the society of the baptized nor of the called. The church is the society which has God's life in it because the individuals in it have assumed the divine nature of God in will and purpose.

Fourth, the church can be called the body of Christ because it participates in His life. Or to say it in another way, Christ is the church's head for He is its will. The church members are those who choose to be commanded by Christ and accept Him as their Lord.

Fifth, the church may be considered God's dwelling. He lives with His family in this "house." Here He gives himself and His gifts. Here in this community is shared a common life with Him.

Life with Christ is essential for the church, but this life is "shared" in a life with fellow Christians. This shared life is one of mutual service. This mutuality is present in spite of different functions, talents, and offices in the community. The equality extends, of course, to the principle of equal access to God. All are priests before God. The ordained minister is but a servant who has been chosen to perform spe-

¹Ibid., p. 501.

cial functions at the call of the community. Every member takes part in the activity of the whole community and has a responsible role in it.

2. The invisibility and visibility of the church

With this great emphasis upon the idea of life, it might have been assumed that Hallesby would be sympathetic to the idea of the invisible church. Such is not the case. He contends that the "living union, which binds the Christian together in a congregation, is of a spiritual and invisible kind but . . . always reveals itself as an outward and visible expression of the life and work together"¹ It is quite possible to speak of the church as being invisible, Hallesby declares, but this truth has often led to many strange misinterpretations. The seventeenth century definition of the invisible church as the only authentic church was in error, he contends, because it eliminates the reality of the church in the world. The essence of the church is invisible, but this in no way implies that the church has no concrete existence in society. He maintains that the church always appears, even to the natural eye of man, in some empirical fashion. The inner life observable only to faith cannot exist without exhibiting itself to the world around it.² The common life of the Christians and their work together in the community is apparent to all. The love which the Christians

¹ Ibid., p. 494.

² Ibid., p. 503.

show to one another and to the world is a sure witness to the life which is the church. The fellowship which the spiritual life creates cannot be hid and is an infallible guide to the existence of the inner spiritual kinship. Nevertheless the boundaries of the church remain somewhat undetermined for the secrets of the heart cannot always be judged by men.

The life in Christ expresses itself through the individual's discipline in prayer, in hearing the preached Word, and in receiving the sacraments. It also must have expression in the ethical conduct of the possessor of that life. Hallesby quotes Luther approvingly: "God's Word cannot exist without God's people nor God's people without God's Word."¹

The empirical reality of the church is quite visible in the organized life of the church. Organization is necessary, for the church does not exist only for its own good but must work to bring the gospel to the whole human race. This work of expanding the kingdom belongs to the essence of the church, too. The church has never existed without missionary activity. This can be described as the church's face to the world and displays the reality of its inner life. There is but one church whose essence is the life of relationships, and this one church manifests its life in a visible way.²

¹Ibid., p. 496.

²Ibid., p. 504.

The Organization and Work of the Church

Many problems arise if the position is taken that the visible organization of the church is a necessary consequence of its inner essence, as Hallesby recognizes. There is, for example, the problem of the unity of the church, which is believed and asserted by Christians, but which seems to be altogether absent if one looks at the organization of the church. Second, the problem of the relation of the members of the organized church to the required spiritual life brings to the fore grave questions about discipline. This is especially severe in Hallesby's Norway where most people baptize their children by custom and consider themselves part of the folk church of the land. Another problem concerns the source of authority within the church itself. Is there a center of authority in the organized church? Finally, there is the vexing question of the state. How does the church as an organization relate itself to that other organization, the state?

Hallesby's answers to these questions are based upon an analysis of the church in the New Testament. The life and work of that early Christian community is for him the pattern for the modern church.

1. The unity of the church

There is but one church. All born of God belong to God's family on earth. But there are many church organizations. There is the temptation to view this situation as denying the professed unity. To do this, however, is to forget that the true unity consists in the life in God and the love

toward one another. The Lutheran Confessions are correct in saying that it is not necessary that the same outward manifestation of unity be present everywhere. "God wills the church's unity but not its uniformity."¹ The church has freedom to organize itself according to its varying needs.

The necessity for the various expressions of Christianity is to be found in the very heart of the whole relation of God to man--freedom. The price of organizational unity is the denial of the freedom of the individual.² Differences of opinion occurred in the New Testament church. A better situation cannot be expected now. Organizations above the congregational level exist for practical reasons and cannot be placed above the inherent rights of persons to experience God in their own way.

The church is Christ's body. All who are personally related to Him are in His body. Just as the various parts of the body are different, both in function and in appearance, so the manifestations of the visible church may differ as long as the living relationship between Christ and the congregation is maintained.³ God has willed it so.

2. The pure church

The church does not meet its high calling, however, unless it strives earnestly to maintain its purity. That is, only those who have a living relationship to their Lord should

¹Ibid., p. 507.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 508.

be permitted to be a part of the fellowship. This pertains both to the limitation of membership to those with a living faith as well as the expulsion of those who either lose their faith or by immoral acts show that they are hypocrites. The church cannot call itself perfect in this regard for even the New Testament church had its hypocrites, but its calling is to exercise vigilance.

In carrying out this policy, the church must not fall into either of two extremes, that is, either become so lax as to abandon its task of self-criticism and permit its community to deteriorate, or become so critical of itself that it judges with a severity lacking in love. Any procedure of church discipline must be Biblical following Matthew 18:15-17 and I Corinthians 5:3-5. Two principles should be followed: whenever action against a Christian is taken, it must be done in order to bring him to salvation, first by warning and entreaty and then only as a final desperate move, by disciplinary action which has as its purpose that of keeping the whole church from becoming endangered by the presence of spiritually dead persons.

How this program can be carried out in any kind of mass action in the Church of Norway is not satisfactorily explained by Hallesby. In actuality, it has led to the exercise of the typical pietistic tendency of forming churches within the church, that is, the organizing of societies and communities within the established church. In Norway, this has resulted in the establishment of prayer houses across the land within the parish divisions and in some cases the building of church buildings. These institutions compete with the established

church for the loyalty and participation of the Christians without claiming to be separated from the church of the land. It has not, strangely enough, led to any important movement for disestablishment.

3. The center of authority

The center of authority in the church is the local congregation. Hallesby claims that Lutherans have swung between two poles. Either they have placed the local congregation under the complete authority of the church hierarchy, such as the New Lutherans of the nineteenth century did, or they have sometimes severed all connections between the local congregations and have thereby abandoned any kind of higher authority.

The Bible knows of no other organization than the local congregation.¹ This means that the congregation must be considered the principal source of authority. No prejudice of the use of larger organizations is thereby meant by Hallesby. Indeed, they are sorely needed, but they can never replace the congregation which is the whole church. The reasons are clear for Hallesby.

First, the local congregation has all that it needs for its life and calling. There is, for example, its relationship to Christ, complete even when there are but two or three people. It possesses all the gifts of grace--the sacraments and the love among the brethren. There is nothing more than this necessary to the church. Second, because of these

¹Ibid., p. 512.

possessions, the local congregation is fully independent and self-governing. In the New Testament it was always the local church which sent out missionaries, gathered gifts, elected leaders, etc.¹ Thirdly, this independence and ability to help itself bestows upon the local congregation the full responsibility. It cannot transfer its duties to another without giving up the characteristics of the true church. This discipline is good for the congregation and helps to keep it "living."

4. The church and the state

The organized church can tolerate no direction from the state. Unfortunately, says Hallesby, the Lutheran tradition is not always clear at this point.² There is the temptation to see the many advantages that come to a folk or a state church such as getting the gospel preached all over the land, achieving some kind of influence over the state itself, and having an established authority as a backing for the church.

Against these obvious advantages Hallesby poses four arguments.³

1) Any control on the part of the state places the church under a hand which can never understand the church's life and work. As long as the state must serve all the citizens, as it indeed must, it will cater to the natural man's understanding of the approach to life. It cannot be depended upon to have the attitude of a reborn man.

¹Ibid., p. 513.

²Ibid., p. 515.

³Ibid.

2) The state must accept a very general approach to religion. All claims to religious truth must be recognized as valid since the state cannot make doctrinal decisions. This denies the one Christian truth.

3) Many who seek a connection of the church with the state really seek a folk church in which the boundaries of the nation coincide with the boundaries of the church. The church and the people should be the same, of course, but what is forgotten, says Hallesby, is that this ideal is never possible without compromise. The true church will always be a minority.

4) Placing the state in any position of authority over the church takes the responsibility away from the local congregation. It will thereby lose its initiative. The voluntary work of the church will die and the whole church will suffer.

Outside of this demand for an independent status for the church, Hallesby develops no doctrine of the state. Evidently, he does not consider this to be within the confines of a dogmatics. The state has its own rights to be developed in its own sphere without direction from the church.

The Church's Equipment: The Means of Grace

The one and essential gift to the church from God is the Holy Spirit.¹ The living relationship between Christ and the believer is created and maintained by the Spirit. Through the believers, the Spirit seeks to win the world to Christ. The fact that believers live in mutual love and unity is a

¹Ibid., p. 525.

witness to their faith. Just as Jesus chose disciples to carry on His work, so the Spirit today uses the individual and the church to extend the kingdom.

This does not mean, says Hallesby, that the Holy Spirit does not use established means. Indeed, He operates in a revealed historic way through outward means called the means of grace--the Word and the sacraments.

The means of grace, as could be guessed by this time in Hallesby, have both an objective and a subjective side. The objective is the revealed character of the means. The Spirit comes in the means. The means are not merely symbols which point to the working of the Spirit. They are the very instruments of the Spirit. The outer sign is wedded to the inner grace and cannot be separated. God is not limited to these historic means, but He has chosen to use them. This implies no magic, for to achieve their ends, salvation for man, the sacraments must be received in faith. This is the subjective side. Thus the means of grace bind together God's whole salvation plan, His offering of grace born out of the obedience and sacrifice of His son, and the reception by man freely in and by his own decision. This is the high point of the God-man relation--the divine and the human coming together.

1. The Word

The primary means of grace is the Word. What does Hallesby mean by this? The church is itself, in a sense, God's mouth.¹ This is not merely because the church possesses a par-

¹ Ibid., p. 525.

ticular message from God, which it does, but rather that in the preaching of Christ in the congregation, God personally meets the faithful hearer. The preaching of God which brings men to an experience of God is the Word operating in its highest sense.

Christ primarily is the Word.¹ Preaching is always about Christ--His life, death, and resurrection. The new man is born out of this witness by the Spirit. The Word is always a saving Word, for Christ is always personally in the Word. It is not that the Word is simply true, as the orthodox Lutherans maintained, but that man meets God there. The Word is saving because it is confrontation with God. The Word is always addressed to the will of man, seeking a decision to surrender to God.

The Word is most effective when it is used by a living person, for it brings a living person to the listener.² This is not to depreciate the reading of the Word in the Bible, but the personal aspect must be considered its best and truest character.

The old distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of dogma is not as important as the orthodox Lutheran thinks. This tends to place the emphasis upon the acceptance of doctrine rather than upon meeting a person through a communication.

The Word consists of both law and gospel. It is the

¹ Ibid., p. 526.

² Ibid., p. 529.

law which brings the sinner to recognize his need of a savior, and it is the gospel which placards the way of salvation. The gospel must always be present to make the Word effective. The power of the Word is not in the preacher but in the presence of the Spirit. It chooses its own time, place, and way. If the preacher is faithful to his calling, the Word will bear fruit.¹

The Bible has already been described as Hallesby understands it. It is God's Word for in it Christ is met. It is a witness to Christ and thus the means by which the Spirit comes.²

2. The sacrament of baptism

Since Hallesby's emphasis has been primarily upon the repentance and conversion of the individual, infant baptism, especially the more traditional Lutheran orientation to regeneration in baptism, poses a particularly vexing problem. What can be the relation between regeneration and awakening? Aside from treatment of this subject in Den Kristelige Tros-laere, Hallesby has dealt with the questions here involved more fully in Infant Baptism and Adult Conversion.³ Two matters are of interest to this study. First, he accepts the confessional position as to the merits of infant baptism. In fact, the most orthodox approach finds great sympathy in Hal-

¹Ibid., p. 530.

²Ibid., p. 537.

³Ole Hallesby, Infant Baptism and Adult Conversion (Minneapolis: Lutheran Free Church Publishing House, 1926).

lesby. Baptism is "individualized grace."¹ It is something God does to the individual. It is an act which changes men into disciples of Jesus and this means further, of course, that men are made partakers of the gift of salvation.² Indeed one must say that to be baptized into the triune God is to "participate in the complete revelation of salvation as achieved in our world."³ This must therefore include the benefits of the forgiveness of sin, the possession of the Holy Spirit and the accompanying regeneration, the rebirth and the gift of faith.

How is this possible in a child? To answer this Hallesby, in the second matter of interest to this study, establishes, true to form, a psychological basis, borrowing the language of depth psychology.

First, since repentance is required by all to obtain salvation, repentance is also demanded of the child. This is possible because repentance is simply the lack of resistance, the yielding of the heart. This resistance must be broken down in the adult, but it is not present in the infant. The child is in a state of repentance, though, as a sinner, he is not justified. Indeed, are we not all to become as little children?⁴ The condition of the call is met. The child needs only the opportunity of salvation.

¹ Ibid., p. 94.

² Ibid., p. 10.

³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

In baptism the child receives the proffered grace necessary to salvation in his unconscious life. Hallesby describes the mental life of all men as consisting of two levels, the conscious and the unconscious. This unconscious life is not only the greater of the two but the first part of the self.¹ This is the life of the child. The conscious life does not begin to appear until the age of two. Sometimes old age brings back this childish state of life, the unconscious state, in the time of senility. Some kinds of insanity can also be described in this fashion. God comes to this unconscious state, meets no resistance, and claims this self as His own. Baptism is therefore a marvelous gift, a gift of pure grace, an example of the freedom of God to give of His love.

The unconscious self becomes a repository for the life thus imparted by God.² As the child matures and his conscious life awakens, he must be disciplined and taught so that he comes aware of that life within him. The power of the Word awakens him to an understanding of what God has done. The child needs the preaching of the law, needs a consciousness of sin, needs awakening and repentance. Every child must have this experience in order to appreciate his great heritage of baptism.³

Hallesby thus attempts to reconcile an experience the-

¹Ibid., p. 27.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³Ibid., p. 59.

ology with the theology of grace. For him, on the one hand, baptism is complete and perfect for the child. On the other hand, it is incomplete and imperfect, for in the adult it must be supplemented by conversion.¹ Baptism is not only for the child, however. It is a great source of comfort for the adult for even though he may abandon the gift, backslide and lose its power, he can always come back to this gift. God never abandons anyone and baptism is a symbol of God's faithfulness. The baptized always has a home to which he can return although his baptism in itself is not salvation if the conscious life has either rejected or ignored it.²

3. The sacrament of the altar

If baptism is individualized grace, the Lord's Supper is communal grace. The congregation kneels at the altar, receiving Christ's body and blood under bread and wine, thereby witnessing to its faith, receiving new strength for the Christian life, and being bound together in still stronger bonds. If spiritual life is the constitutive factor of the church, the transference of life through the sacrament ought to be greatly emphasized. If the experience of God's presence is the raison d'être of the Christian faith, experiencing God in His very flesh and blood ought to be the epitome of the Christian life. The benefits are numerous.

First, the Supper is a reminder of the Lord Jesus.³

¹ Ibid., p. 69.

² Ibid., pp. 83ff.

³ Troslaere, II, p. 574.

Through all of the symbols in the sacrament, the broken bread, the wine, the altar, the believer is brought close to his Savior and His sufferings. It thus deepens the living personal relationship with Him.¹

Second, the acceptance of the body and blood is a personal confession. It is the opportunity to witness to one's faith, to take a stand with the Lord, to make the decision anew.²

Third, the sacrament strikes at the heart of the God experience for it reminds the receiver of the cost of the forgiveness of sins and thereby strengthens the individual's confidence in its reality.³

Fourth, as a sacrificial service, the reminder of the passion of Christ produces in the Christian a new dedication to the Lord's service. Even as He sacrificed himself, so now the believer offers himself to his master. The sacrifice of Christ is not repeated or in any sense re-enacted, but the individual enacts over and over again his yielding and his dedication to the Lord's call.⁴

Fifth, in addition to the foregoing, which Hallesby calls the salvation work of the Eucharist, there is the sacramental work.⁵ The salvation work is the same as that accom-

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 575.

³ Ibid., p. 587.

⁴ Ibid., p. 589.

⁵ Ibid., p. 590.

plished by the Word and is sufficient for salvation. The Lord's Supper in addition to this ministers to the deepest self (dypeste livsgrunde) in a mysterious and mystical way not possible by the Word alone. The Word speaks to the will, the conscious life; baptism to the unconscious life; the Lord's Supper strikes the most profound note of all, ministering to the whole person--the conscious, unconscious, and emotional life--touching the part of the self inaccessible to any other medium. Since this is beyond man's understanding, it must be left to the secret wisdom of God. Man's need for the sacrament, however, is a psychological fact and testifies to its inner mystery.¹

Sixth, the sacramental meal is for the congregation. In strengthening the individual it automatically undergirds and builds the living relationships of the community. This helps to bind together the community at its deepest level.²

A Psychological Concept

That which makes the church the church for Ole Hallesby is the religious experience of the individual. The saved individuals seek others who have had the same experience and bind themselves together in little communities which continue to re-live together the God-experience. This is the church. The concept of the church is therefore primarily psychological in character. It is the feeling of trust that constitutes faith. This feeling of trust is based upon the psychology of

¹Ibid., pp. 594ff.

²Ibid., pp. 593ff.

the relationship between persons, primarily that of the mysterious ability of the self to relate itself to another self, primarily, in this case, to God. Having experienced this, the individual knows how to achieve a trusting relationship with other persons and in so doing creates a community. Of course, the objective character of God is not denied. Indeed, God is affirmed as "absolute" person and God's actions in history are viewed as scientific events, but it is only after experiencing the list of the psychological events of the ordo salutis that God becomes meaningful. And it is only as a consequence of these experiences that the church is possible. They create the church. Although the Word of God retains a certain objective character, both faith and the church are "psychologized." The church is like a family, God's family on earth.

CHAPTER V

CORPUS CHRISTI

An Ontological Concept of the Church

The church is a heavenly organism, but at the same time perceptible and visible on earth, existing on the border between two worlds, two aeons, having a quality that transcends every present age in history.¹

--Gustaf Aulen on the church

The Lundensian School of Lutheran Theology

With the exhibition of the two "old" Lutheran concepts of the church--twentieth century repristination theology and pietism--we are now prepared to examine two "new" Lutheran interpretations--the Lundensian school of Sweden and the neo-Lutheran school in Germany. We devote this chapter to the Lundensians.

The repristination position seeks to restore a particular interpretation of the Reformation, that of the seventeenth century orthodoxy, and in doing so, completely bypasses the philosophical and theological developments since that time. The pietists, in a somewhat similar way, grow out of a particular historical movement, that of eighteenth century Pietism, but try to fit the religious concepts of that era into a theological pattern moulded by Schleiermacher and the Erlangen

¹Gustaf Aulen, Church, Law, and Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 16.

school while keeping the outlines of Lutheran orthodoxy. In contrast to both of these interpretations of Lutheranism, the Lundensian school presents a new approach to the Reformation which is quite frankly conditioned by the intervening developments in both philosophy and theology but which claims to be, nevertheless, a more valid interpretation of Luther.

Before delving into the content of the doctrine of the church of this Swedish school, it is necessary to examine briefly its general background, leading exponents, and chief presuppositions.

1. The background of the Lundensian Interpretation

The University of Lund, situated near the southern tip of Sweden and thus closer to Germany than almost any other part of Scandinavia, even closer than most of Denmark, has always reflected German thought. While Uppsala University, located north of Stockholm in eastern Sweden, remained under the domination of an orthodox pietism during the nineteenth century, the Lund University Theological Faculty was greatly influenced by the succession of philosophical and theological developments in Germany. In the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, all the trends were toward a neo-Protestant liberalism. Four of them are worthy of mention here.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, the main interpreter of German Idealism in Sweden was the prominent philosopher C. J. Boström. In a country as small as Sweden, it is often possible for an aggressive and gifted thinker to

dominate the scene. As a result of Boström's influence, Idealism completely engulfed the Swedish philosophers. Around 1900 the emphasis changed and logical positivism gradually took the place of Idealism until it ruled as completely as had its predecessor. From the milieu of the religious overtones of Idealism, the situation became one where any objective existence of a transcendent realm was ridiculed.

The theologians felt uncomfortable under both systems. Idealism was attacked as a great danger to Lutheran traditionalism. When positivism took over, however, many theologians found a convenient shelter in its former enemy and used Idealism to ward off the challenges of the empiricism of positivism. However, in either case, theology found itself in a crisis.

At the same time as this danger threatened from philosophy, the new evidence of Biblical scholarship and the results of the research by the history of religion scholars proved to be another problem to theologians. Wellhausen's Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israel had a tremendous effect upon Einar Billing, often called Sweden's greatest theologian. The crisis of historicism had just as great an effect in Sweden as in Germany, although its impact came a little later.

The third liberal influence upon Swedish thought in the nineteenth century was the naturalism which came primarily via the literary works of Erik Geijer and Viktor Rydberg. Liberalism in its cultural and literary aspects was championed. Young theologians already isolated from the great intellectual movements saw in this emphasis on optimistic personalism a tempting and compelling lure. The fourth liberal contribution

was the direct influence of the new German "scientific" liberals such as Ritschl, Herrmann, Troeltsch, and Harnack. Ritschl and Herrmann, especially, had great influence on both Söderblom and Billing as well as the later generations at Lund.

The crisis in Lutheran theology was deep and devastating. Challenges came from every direction. There was a need for a theological leadership which would either succumb to the influences gracefully, reject them by a vigorous reassertion of the traditional views, or forge a new way in both methodology and content. In Norway, where the crisis came at the same time but with less intensity, the reaction came in the form of rejection and the reassertion of the traditional orthodox pietism clothed in a new theological garb. In Sweden, the reaction climaxed in the third way--a complete "overhauling" of theological methodology and a new interpretation of the traditional Lutheran doctrine. This movement centered at the University of Lund and is commonly called the "Lundensian school."

2. The men and their influence

The two most important men to take up the challenge were Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931) and Einar Billing (1871-1939). Söderblom came to the Uppsala Faculty in 1901 and in 1914 became Archbishop of Uppsala. Billing was professor at Uppsala from 1908 until he became Bishop of Västerås in 1920. These great churchmen were not necessarily the theological mentors of the coming Lundensian school, for their disciples often criticized their views drastically, but they were the leaders in the cause of a new theological approach and provided

the impetus and the attitudes for the enterprise. Neither man produced a theological system, but thought of himself as "riding the storm" at its crest. Both were deeply conservative and held to traditional views on most matters, but at the same time felt the great need to reach out to the new ideas and to understand and incorporate them.

There are three emphases in Söderblom's thought that became the special interests of the later Lundensians.¹ His most basic idea was that of revelation. For him revelation was a knowledge qualitatively different from other knowledge and absolutely realized in Jesus Christ. It has a personal nature and is continuously disclosed through what Söderblom called "prophetism." "Prophetism" is God's way to men independent of man's own efforts. In a more general sense, "prophetism" can be realized in the cultural manifestations of art, literature, and philosophy. The special revelation in Christ and the general revelation through culture ascend together to the climax of monotheism. His views led to a great interest in other religions and especially to Zoroastrianism and a stress upon dualism, holiness, and eschatology. His heritage to his pupils was that revelation was both dynamic and objective for it was the activity of God outside of man's desire or efforts.

His second interest of importance to our discussion was his continuous effort to relate the Ritschlian stress on

¹ Söderblom's important works, translated by F. E. Pamp, include: The Nature of Revelation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933); Christian Fellowship (New York: F. H. Revell Co., 1923); Den levande Gud (The Living God) (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonstyrelses bokförlag, 1932).

the ethical nature of grace to the Lutheran milieu. This naturally led to the development of a strong social consciousness in him and to his great activity in the world peace effort after World War I (which won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925) and his leadership in the Life and Work movement of the 1920s. Nygren's concentration on ethical problems can find its inspiration here.

The third concern of Söderblom was the church. A series of religious revivals in Sweden in the mid-nineteenth century led by C. O. Rosenius advocated the free association of believers as an alternative to the traditional Swedish folk church. The resulting confusion forced the Swedish church to rethink its doctrine of the church. The wide success of the Rosenian movement caused great defection from the established church, so that by 1900 the State Church was seriously weakened. Söderblom's interest in the problem centered at two points: the need for an undergirding theology for the folk church and his vision of the one church, the ecumenical church. Both concerns were to become basic parts of the Lundensian position.

Einar Billing was less dramatic than Söderblom, but probably a more profound thinker. His influence upon his many disciples is more enduring but in many ways more difficult to analyze. He is chiefly remembered for his great interest in ethics, the church, and Luther. The great emphasis upon the concept of the Christian "calling" in Sweden is directly attributable to him, and he is certainly the father of the Swedish Lutherforschung.¹ He shared Söderblom's idea of the dy-

¹Billing's doctoral dissertation, Luthers lära om

namic revelation of God in history, although he placed it in a framework of the will of God rather than in an epistemological pattern. His typological approach to the history of religion is a direct predecessor of the motivforskning of the Lundensians. Other ideas were decisively rejected by his disciples, however, just as in the case of Söderblom. Lundensian theology must be judged as an independent school which received only germinal ideas from its predecessors. Söderblom and Billing paved the way for the Lund Faculty by bequeathing the inquiring attitude and freedom of movement together with theological conservatism and a love of Luther. What Söderblom and Billing had tentatively begun had to be thoroughly dissected and out of the results a new system erected.

The two chief figures in this formidable undertaking are Gustaf Aulen (1879-) and Anders Nygren (1890-). Aulen began his career at Uppsala in 1906 and moved to Lund in 1914, where he remained on the faculty until he became the Bishop of Strängnäs in 1933. When he moved to Lund, the Lutherforschung moved with him. Nygren, a younger colleague, became professor at Lund in 1924, and in 1949 the Bishop of Lund.

Of the two men, Aulen has been the systematician and

staten (Luther's Teaching Concerning the State), published in 1900, is generally regarded as the real beginning of the Swedish Luther renaissance. Edgar Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948), p. 37. His other important works are: De etiska tankarna i urkristendomen (The Ethical Thoughts of Primitive Christianity) (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonstyrelses bokförlag, 1907), Vår Kallelse (Our Calling) (Stockholm: S. K. D., 1909), Den svenska folkkyrkan (The Swedish Folk Church) (Stockholm: S. K. D., 1920), and Kyrka och stat (Church and State) (Stockholm: S. K. D., 1942).

Luther scholar. His doctoral thesis at Uppsala in 1913 was on the Lutheran idea of the church and heralded his great interest in both the church and Luther. His most important work is his dogmatics, a one-volume work entitled The Faith of the Christian Church, which exposes the entire range of thought of the Lundensian system.¹ His main interests are effectively noted by the three main divisions of this work: The Living God; The Act of God in Christ; The Church of God. No Lutheran theologian since the Reformation has given such prominence to the doctrine of the church in a dogmatics.

Nygren's first interest was the philosophical foundations of theology. The works resulting from his investigations were written in the twenties and have not been translated. With his views defined in this area, he turned to ethics and produced the monumental Agape and Eros.² In recent years, his published works have centered around the doctrine of the church. His editorship of En Bok om Kyrkan³ and the Laidlaw lectures published under the title Christ and His Church⁴ have made him one of the current major spokesmen for the Lundensians. He has been called the "really epoch making

¹Gustaf Aulen, trans. Eric Wahlstrom and G. Everett Arden, The Faith of the Christian Church (4th ed.; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948).

²Anders Nygren, trans. Philip S. Watson, Agape and Eros (London: SPCK, 1953).

³Appeared in English in part. Anders Nygren (ed.), This is the Church, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1952).

⁴Anders Nygren, trans. Alan Carlsten, Christ and His Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956).

figure of Lundensian theology,"¹ and is as well a world leader in the Lutheran Church, having served a term as the first president of the Lutheran World Federation from 1947 to 1952.

To what degree the Lundensian views have influenced the Lutheran Church is difficult either to document or even analyze in a general way. This school has dominated the Lund Theological Faculty since shortly before World War I. Only recently has any serious criticism of the system come from that Faculty.² Since Lund graduates about half of the theological students in Sweden, a corresponding effect upon the Church of Sweden might be expected. The situation in the Swedish church has been very complex since the Rosenian movement, however, and is not nearly as easily characterized as are, for example, the moods of the Norwegian church. A significant section of the Church of Sweden is under the influence of pietism, and students of that persuasion may or may not be converted to the Lundensians while studying at Lund. At the other extreme there has been a strong "high church" movement in Sweden. One segment of it is led by a parish pastor, Gunnar Rosendal, and the other by the Uppsala Faculty which is more sympathetic to the Anglican communion than the Lund Faculty. The Lundensians stand somewhere in the middle between these two extremes and, in the public image, are con-

¹Leiv Aalen, "Principal Systematic Problems of Present-Day Scandinavian Theology," Lutheran World, III (June, 1956), p. 45.

²Gustaf Wingren, successor to Nygren's chair, has led an attack on the Lundensians' presuppositions. See his Theology in Conflict, trans. Eric Wahlstrom (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958).

sidered the preservers of the Lutheran position.¹ Their influence is substantial, but it is questionable whether or not one could label it the majority opinion in Sweden.

The influence outside of Sweden is in some respects more widespread and successful. Aulen's The Faith of the Christian Church is one of the very few Lutheran dogmatics available in English and has been widely used in American Lutheran seminaries, especially those of the United Lutheran Church in America and the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is Swedish in background. Non-Lutheran seminaries as well have used it often as a textbook, and many private colleges have utilized it as a basis for college religion courses.² No outstanding disciples have come forward on the American scene, however. The chief interpreters within the Lutheran Church have been Eric Wahlstrom, Edgar Carlson, Conrad Bergendoff, and Carl C. Rasmussen. Outside of the Lutheran family, Nels Ferre and L. J. Trinterud have been important spokesmen.

The influence in the rest of Scandinavia has been very slight, with the possible exception of Denmark, whose Copenhagen Faculty is almost within commuting distance of Lund. Strangely enough, Karl Barth has had a greater influence in Denmark than Lundensianism. Norway has either by-passed or rejected what it considers the Lundensians' liberalness.

¹Aulen considers himself between "rationalism and pietism." Church, Law and Society, op. cit., p. 13.

²W. M. Horton characterizes Lundensianism in this non-Lutheran setting as a "reaction against liberalism in somewhat the same sense as Barth but quite independent and more moderate. W. M. Horton, Contemporary Continental Theology (New York: Harper and Bros., 1938), p. 155.

Finland is dominated by the same kind of pietism as Norway. The Germans have, as usual, been influenced very little by any school of thought originating outside of their own land.

The prestige of the Lundensians is very high, however, in international church circles. Nygren, especially, has been very active in both the Lutheran World Federation, especially since World War II, and the Faith and Order movement.¹

It must be concluded that the Lundensian school, although it may not have as broad an appeal in Lutheranism as its "old" schools of theology, must be judged as an alternative with which world Lutheranism must reckon.

The Presuppositions of the Lundensian System

A description of the presuppositions of the Lundensians in three areas is necessary at this point: The new approach to Luther; the motivforskning and Immanuel Kant; the character of theology.

1. The new approach to Luther

The Luther renaissance in Sweden is second only to that great movement in Germany. It is second only in that the number of scholars involved is less in Sweden than in Germany. It is second neither in the sense that it has been dependent

¹ It is generally agreed that Nygren was the most important voice in the framing of the famous document on the doctrine of grace at the World Conference on Faith and Order in Edinburgh in 1937. The writer was present at the Third World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund in 1951 and saw the great influence which Nygren wielded in teaming with the New Lutherans of Germany to move Faith and Order into a study of Christ and the church.

upon the German effort, for it has not, nor that it suffers qualitatively in any comparison with the German progress. Gustaf Aulen is without any question the Holl of Sweden.

Two matters are worthy of note here, the methods used by the Swedish research and the chief presuppositions in their approach to Luther.

Einar Billing had lain the groundwork for the method of Luther research, a method often called "historical-systematic."¹ First, the approach to Luther must be resolutely historical. The sitz im leben must be thoroughly observed and any interpretation or systematization of Luther must be very carefully screened before it could be of any value at all in understanding Luther as he really was. A detailed philological study is involved here, of course. Second, Luther must be approached systematically. Luther's insight into the gospel determines his system, and an interpretation of Luther must permit this insight to dominate the scene. The basic question always is: "How can man get together with God?" Everything in Luther must be interpreted in the light of this central thought, even his economic views. The systematic approach must seek to uncover not only the real meaning of Luther's thought in the context furnished by historical research, but also the premises upon which these ideas rest. The motif-research to be presently described is thus applied to Luther research and vigorously.

Three insights gained from Luther form the three main

¹This is Carlson's phrase. Op. cit., p. 37.

points of interest in continuing the research. These are, co-incidentally, the three main interests of Swedish theology, revelation, the church, and the Christian calling.

Revelation is always conceived in dynamic terms as over against all passive or static historicism or intellectual rationalism. Revelation is the divine activity--an event which God does. This activity takes place in history, but it is not limited to the confines of historical categories--it is "super-historical" and "sacramental" in character. It cannot be limited to certain teachings or doctrines or personalities or even epochs. Not even Christ can be isolated from the dramatic continuum of history, although the revelation is absolutely realized in Him. Carlson characterizes the view as "dynamic-dualistic-dramatic."¹

The concept of the church is the main subject of this chapter and will be investigated more thoroughly after the next section. It is enough to say at this point that the church is the direct counterpart of this divine activity. Whenever the Word is active, a fellowship exists and the church comes into being.²

¹Ibid., p. 37.

²The brief description of Carlson of the Lundensian understanding of the church, op. cit., pp. 32-34, 128-139, is based almost completely on Aulen's doctoral thesis of 1912. This is unfortunate since it gives the impression that the Lundensian view is limited to a dynamic view of the fellowship-creating Word and that the church is "basically the invisible creation of this divine activity." (p. 33.) The contention of this writer is that both Aulen and Nygren have understood this as only the beginning of the church and that the "result" is the corpus Christi, a much more ontologically oriented concept than that indicated by Carlson. This is made clear by Aulen's The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., and Nygren's Christ and His Church, op. cit.

The activity of the revelation resulting in the being of the church calls for a theological imperative for the church's penetration into the social order. At this point Einar Billing's basic Luther research into the "calling" becomes extremely important. The church and the individual cannot abandon society even though they are "called" by a "superhistorical" revelation. The Christian is to accept the responsibilities of an earthly calling and serve God by doing his job well, whatever it may be. The church must also serve the nation and its calling, to the Lundensians, is best done through the folk church.

It is within this framework that Luther becomes the greatest single influence in the formation of this theological system.

2. The motivforskning and Immanuel Kant

The theological methodology of the Lundensians is called motivforskning, motif-research. Its presuppositions lie embedded in the critical philosophy of Kant. An explanation is in order.

The motif-research seeks to discover the fundamental motif in a system of thought. The fundamental motif in any particular system is that which gives it its own peculiar meaning. It "is that essential constituent which gives coherence to the whole and makes it what it is."¹ The Lundensians have sought to reduce to the single principle of agape the entire complex and involved system of thought of Chris-

¹Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 25.

tianity and with that principle compare and evaluate its essence. In this way they hope to see more clearly the real meaning of all of the interrelated parts and at the same time to understand the real worth of the motivating force of Christianity in comparison with the underlying movements of other religious systems. Theology is conceived as an inner, organic homogeneity and not as a "loci theology"--a series of self-contained statements. The purpose of theological research is to go beneath historical symbols and discover the fundamental meaning of Christian experience, Christian affirmations, and the historical events which gave birth to the Christian faith.

Behind this method lies the transcendentalism of Immanuel Kant. Nygren uses what he calls "the transcendental deduction of the fundamental category of religion" to establish the validity of theological inquiry.¹ "That which must be valid in order that experience as a whole shall be possible is necessarily and universally valid and is therefore a priori," says Nygren.² The theological methodology of pre-critical philosophy endeavored to deal with the question of objective reality. The attempts at a metaphysics usually adopted a psychological epistemology which assumed a basic opposition between subject and object. The object could be known only as the result of the activity of the subject, the object being

¹The best discussion of Nygren's views is in Nels Ferre, Swedish Contributions to Modern Theology (New York: Harper and Bros., 1939), pp. 38ff.

²Quoted by Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1958), p. 4.

maneuvered into a static and passive role. As a consequence, the subject was modified in the process of the knowing and the concept of reality became identified with the reality itself. The explanation of how the subject could know its opposite, the object, was never satisfactorily explained and was usually assigned to the realm of mystery. For anyone who understood the problem, the choice was between vague speculations and skepticism.

Kant argued that the presuppositions for metaphysics are not in experience. The empirical method cannot therefore produce a metaphysics since no deductive method can prove its original premises. Critical philosophy dismissed the question of objective reality and defined the area of competence as the problem of objective validity. The Kantian revolution, by this transcendental method, limited the field of investigation to experience and had to make only one assumption--that rational knowledge is possible. When applied to theological methodology, this meant that the competence of theology ends when it has tested religious experience as to its objective validity. Nygren, in taking this position, says: "It is becoming clear that the philosophy of religion has no right to exist except in the closest relation with critical philosophy and that from this point of view its task can be no other than the investigation into the validity of religious experience as a whole."¹

This task of philosophy of religion is to test the

¹Ferre, op. cit., p. 40.

claims of religious experience to be a priori. To ascertain whether or not this is true, the experience must be shown to be universally valid by an analysis of the religious testimonies in their historical form. The choice is not between religious experience which is only individual and therefore not universally valid or universally valid and therefore universally logically demonstrable. Another alternative, that religious experience is universally valid because it is an experience which is "trans-subjectively" valid, that is, a transcendental experience, is possible. The experience is binding to the one experiencing it, and thus assumes an absolute form, translating it to that significance which involves the whole existence of the individual. This proves that it is a priori, that is, objectively valid. Religious experience can claim therefore to be a completely independent form of experience which cannot be reduced to any other form of experience. It is a universally valid value alongside of other universally valid values: knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics. This Kant himself did not understand. Nygren's conclusion is: "The philosophy of religion, therefore, accepting the self-testimony of religion that it is an independent and unique form of experience, establishes the validity of the form of religion by the transcendental deduction."¹

3. The objective character of theology

The theological discipline is therefore completely

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

objective in character.¹ The content of theology is a "given, objective reality."² "It's task is neither demonstrative nor normative, but analytical and critical."³ Systematic theology is confronted with the same situation as are all other scientific disciplines, namely, that it is concerned with the study of a definite object.⁴ It can neither furnish proofs for faith nor determine what ought to be believed. The attempt is rather to understand the faith and to present the ideas and viewpoints of faith itself with the greatest possible clarity. Differentiations must be made between theology and philosophy of religion, which seeks a rational metaphysics, and with psychology of religion, which deals with the religious subject and is limited to an analysis of the religious consciousness. Theology cannot be limited by any confession or any real concern for apologetics. The field of operation is the investigation of the Christian faith--the analyzing and criticising of everything related to God in His essence and activity. This is done by the application of the scientific method, not to human feeling, but to what has happened in history and in nature. Its end purpose is to "understand the faith as an historical manifestation,"⁵ which is the same as understanding God, for He is the only object of faith.⁶

¹See The Reinterpretation of Luther, op. cit., pp. 28-47.

²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 4.

³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵Ibid., p. 15.

⁶Ibid.

The Substance of Lundensian Theology

Before analyzing the concept of the church which flows out of the presuppositions, it is necessary to have an orientation in the substance of this theological system. Three items are sufficient: the doctrine of God, the act of God in Christ, and the notion of faith.

1. The doctrine of God

The motif research came to the conclusion that the fundamental motif of Christianity is, "God is agape." Agape is the essence of the Christian faith. It is the "inmost character of the conception of God."¹ Nothing can be said about God or about any of His attributes that is not in the last analysis a statement about His love.² The Johannine statement that God is love summarizes everything that can be said about the Christian idea of God. The opposition to evil is called wrath, hate, etc., but this is really love as the Lundensians interpret it. The cross, which is the epitome of divine love, is the synthesis of love's radical opposition to and sovereignty over evil. Divine love is the sovereign power of creation. God's omnipotence is simply His sovereignty of love. Eternity is the sovereignty of love in relation to time. God's immutability is love's sovereign steadfastness; omnipresence, the sovereignty of love in relation to space. Omniscience is love's sovereign and "penetrating

¹Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 131.

²Ibid.

eye." Sovereignty and love are correlative. There is no tension between them.¹

An adequate definition of what is meant by agape would take the "whole exposition of the content of the Christian faith."² No statement can be made about any part of the Christian faith which does not in some way reflect some aspect of this concept. Two characteristics of love are fundamental: First, agape is spontaneous. Its cause lies within itself.³ No occurrence calls it forth. God loves because it is His nature to love and it has always been so. Second, agape is always self-giving. God gives Himself. The Christian faith is not a picture of the divine majesty of God receiving obedience from below, but rather one in which God comes down to give himself. The realization of agape is a continuous activity which can be summarized by the concepts of creation, judgment, and salvation. The ineffable becomes historical in these three ways. The distinctive mark of agape is that it creates a fellowship between God and man. Although it is a reality which man cannot fully experience, agape does accomplish its main purpose--saving mankind.

2. The act of God in Christ

The establishment of agape as the all-embracing motif in the Christian faith and the complete identification of agape with God, thus making theology completely theocentric, creates

¹ Ibid., p. 143.

² Ibid., p. 133.

³ Ibid.

no Christological problems for the Lundensians. Although all Christian faith is faith in God, it is at the same time centered in Christ.¹ Faith in Christ is not faith in something besides God, or in addition to Him, but a faith in the One who reveals God's essence and will.² Faith in Christ is simply a definition of the nature of God and the Christian's relation to Him. There is no tension or antithesis in asserting that the Christocentric faith of the Christian is theocentric.

The faith of the Christian is that God was incarnate in the man Jesus Christ.³ The basic meaning of the incarnation is not that Christ is an intermediary being, or an ideal man, or identical with God. The work of Christ is the center of attention. It is the act of God in Christ to which the Christian faith is always directed.⁴

The work of Christ is that act of divine love on the cross through which God establishes the reconciliation between himself and the world.⁵ This act occurred in history, a history conceived in dramatic terms.⁶ History is not an evolution toward perfection within the boundaries of this world and time, but a drama in which God's agape wars against

¹Ibid., p. 59.

²Ibid., p. 60.

³Ibid., p. 209.

⁴Ibid., p. 210.

⁵Ibid., p. 223.

⁶Aulen's important work on the atonement, which is based upon this concept of history, is Christus Victor, trans. A. G. Hebert (London: SPCK, 1950).

the evil forces with Christ as the warrior.¹ He won the victory over the evil forces. In this victory agape was realized in history.

The two-pronged accomplishment of Christ, the victory over the demonic powers which enslaved humanity and the reconciliation of God and man, is called the atonement. It ought not to be interpreted as a compensation paid to divine righteousness. The Lundensians admit the sacrificial character of the atonement, but only in the sense that God sacrifices himself. The punishment Christ endures is that which results from the struggle between evil and the divine wrath from God. The divine agape enters into solidarity with the world in Christ and suffers as a consequence. Only from this perspective can the atonement be called "vicarious." The phrase "in our stead" must be carefully interpreted so that it does not mean that the burden of man is automatically removed from man to Christ.

The act of God in Christ retains a completely objective character. It was with us and for us but not in place of us that Christ died. And it was primarily concerned with realities and powers outside of us.²

The work of Christ is from one point of view once and for all accomplished through the cross. From another point of view, it is a continuous work--the work of "Kyrios-Christus"

¹Aulen, Church, Law, and Society, op. cit., p. 12.

²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., pp. 226-231.

and of the Spirit.¹ The continuous work of Christ receives its content from the finished work and implies a realization of it.² Christ appears now as the lord of the Christian life, as the revelation of the significance of the cross. Christ lives, that is, He is set free from the earthly limitations of space and time and belongs entirely to the divine life. In this exaltation, He exercises His dominion over the world.³

3. The notion of faith

The comprehensive relationship established between God and man by virtue of the act of agape in the man Jesus Christ is best described by the word faith. It is the principal word in systematic theology.⁴ The investigation of what it means is the whole task of theology.

Faith is understood as a relationship with the sovereign God. The nature of faith, too, is entirely theocentric. God is the center and God dominates the situation. Faith and God are totally co-joined and cannot be separated. One always implies the other.

The relationship to God is characterized by the concepts fellowship and remoteness. God unites himself with men through faith. He is, in Augustine's words, "closer to us than we ourselves." But this does not abolish the distance

¹Ibid., p. 207.

²Ibid., p. 241.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

which separates God and man.¹ There is no mystical mixture of the divine and the human. Aulen insists that there is no suggestion of identity. Indeed the closer faith brings man to God, the more clearly man becomes conscious of the great distance between him and God. God becomes God in faith. Everything to be said about faith is an implication or affirmation of this basic tenet.

The relationship between God and man can be viewed from two points. On the one hand, God completely subdues and dominates man, but on the other hand, man commits himself to God. This is a paradox without solution.² This another way of saying that faith is grounded in revelation and that revelation can only be apprehended by faith. They are, in Aulen's words, correlative concepts.³ The basis of faith is the God who reveals himself. God, being unfathomable and inscrutable, confronts and subdues man. The eye of faith perceives this revelation of the hidden and mysterious God. In this act of faith revelation is primary, even though it is possible only when faith recognizes the revelation. Faith is not necessary to God's activity in His revelation, but it is necessary to the reception of revelation.

The content of faith is therefore fixed for God's revelation has happened even as it is happening. This does not mean that revelation is the same as a system of doctrine.

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²Ibid., p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 22.

Assensus is assuredly a necessary part of faith but it is not primary to fiducia. It is an assensus, a yes to God's work and promise, but it is at the same time a trust. Neither the intellectualism implied by assensus nor the subjectivism implied by fiducia can be primary. Faith cannot be validated by a distinction between life and teaching. It cannot find its significance in either a legalistic Biblicism or an evolutionary traditionalism. The center must be in the act of God in Christ in which the Bible is primary with tradition and sound doctrine assisting in a secondary way.

The affirmations of faith are symbolic in character for their source is a divine revelation and thus outside this finite world, and yet they are made in terminology confined to time and space. Faith understands that its words are imperfect tools.¹ This does not imply that the affirmations of faith are less than essential to their proper task. They are full of the richest meaning, and contain what is essential to faith. But the certainty of faith is not related to the adequacy of its expression. Its certainty is not demonstrable, either through any rational logic or any pragmatic event. The testimonium spiritussancti internum is the only proof which faith has or needs. Faith relies upon its inner inescapable compulsion.

¹Ibid., p. 97.

The Nature of the Divine Reality

It has been necessary to describe the presuppositions and substance of the Lundensian theology to prepare the reader for the discussion of the concept of the church. The fact that the theology is objective in character is very important. Unless this sometimes subtle but carefully calculated milieu is ~~not~~ fully impressed upon the reader, there will be difficulty in capturing this idea of the church. The church involves some difficulty, not because of the language, which is clear enough, nor because of the ideas, which are not necessarily new, but because the application of some of the ideas to the nature of the church is a new undertaking in Protestant theology.

Although Kant is not mentioned in this connection, the idea of the "Ding an sich" is hard to escape. The church is approached as a reality which is there but which cannot be fully apprehended or even described. The essence of the church is limited to the eyes of faith and faith which works with symbols which cannot capture the "substance" of what is there.

What is the church? It is the corpus Christi, "a divine creation in the world of men."¹ The intervention of the divine agape has brought about a new "order of existence."² This existence may be called the existence of Christ himself "as he is present with us and meets us here on earth."³

¹ Ibid., p. 335.

² Anders Nygren, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen, Commentary on Romans (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 23.

³ Nygren, This is the Church, op. cit., p. 10.

The church is Christ himself--His embodiment upon earth. It is an "organism" which is the "continuance" of a people which transcends both history and thought although it is at the same time revealed in history and accessible both to experience and description. First, we shall examine briefly what this does not mean.

Luther's simple definition of the church as eine Versammlung aller christgläubigen auf erden, congregatio sanctorum, is correct, according to Aulen, but does not convey the full meaning of Luther's own conception.¹ It has too often been used to indicate wrong approaches to the whole problem. There is too much of the air of sociological categories which lead the investigator astray. The social activity of like-minded believers does not bring the church into being. Any view which relates to the quality of faith or human endeavor of individuals is based upon a subjective piety which is completely out of place in the whole scheme of the Christian faith. Indeed, the church is never adequately defined when its definition is framed only in terms of the people.² The church cannot be considered quantitatively.³ It is not the summation of anything--the addition of congregations or individuals or confessional organizations. The depth of spiritual endeavor, if thought of in any quantitative way, is not

¹Aulen, Till Belysning af den Lutherske Kyrkoiden, op. cit., p. 13.

²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 335.

³Nygren, Christ and His Church, op. cit., p. 99.

a proper description of the church.¹ The church cannot be fully understood when limited to any of the forms of its community such as the ministry, the worship experience, or the coming together for any purpose. What the church possesses, such as the truth in the form of doctrine or the sacraments as church rituals or the Bible as a source of authority, is not a criterion of the essence of the church. No kind of mystic experience can be called its reality.² No kind of idealistic notion captures its meaning. The church is "not a general idea which floats above the world."³

The church must be understood in terms of its givenness, its thereness, its objectivity, that is, its being. To understand this, one must begin with the relation of Christ to the church. Six suggestions as to how this can be done follow:

1) The church and Christ are correlative, that is, one is never without the other. "There is no Christ without the church--no church without Christ."⁴ The contention is that the Bible always pictures Christ in relation to the church.⁵ Wherever Christ is mentioned or meant, the church is also implied and vice versa. The whole Biblical history can be depicted in terms such as these:

God and the people of God,
God and Israel,

¹ Ibid., p. 97.

² Nygren, This is the Church, op. cit., p. 9.

³ Nygren, Christ and His Church, op. cit., p. 98.

⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

Messiah and the Messianic people,
 Son of Man and the 'people of the Most High,'
 The Suffering Servant of the Lord and 'the many,'
 Christ and those who are Christ's,
 Christ and the Christians,
 Christ and the body of Christ,
 Christ, the Head, and the Church, which is his body,
 The Good Shepherd and his sheep.¹

This is not a coincidence. "If Christ had had no relation to His Church, he would not have been the Christ. He is the Christ precisely because he 'loved the church and gave himself up for it.'"² The ancient Ignatian formula ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia can be reversed to ubi ecclesia, ibi Christus.³

2) This leads to an even more intimate relation between Christ and the church which the New Testament describes as the corpus Christi. In his exegesis of John 15:5, Nygren says that "we must rid ourselves of our customary individualistic presuppositions which posit Christ as one individual and the disciples as others distinct from him. No, Christ is the whole."⁴ The disciples participate in Christ. Christ has, therefore, says Aulen, become "embodied in the church."⁵ The church is the "mode of living" of Christ.⁶ Properly understood in this sense, Christ is incarnate in the church.

¹Ibid., p. 90.

²Ibid., p. 91.

³J. Robert Nelson notes this disapprovingly in his The Realm of Redemption (London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 90.

⁴Nygren, Christ and His Church, op. cit., p. 92.

⁵Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 332.

⁶Ibid., p. 329.

3) To use other language, the church is the continuous work of Christ. The church as an objective reality was "given in and with the incarnation of Christ" which continues to this day as the regnum Christi.¹ He became the "Kyrios-Christus" upon the conclusion of His work on the cross and remains this until the consummation. The church is placed in an eschatological perspective between an event of the past, the finished work on the cross, and an event in the future, the eschaton.

4) The church can, therefore, be characterized also by the term "the new aeon." Just as Adam is described by Paul in Romans 5 as the head of mankind, so Christ is the "head of a new humanity."² As all of man was bound under a great oneness in Adam, so now a new humanity is bound to Christ. Whereas the old age was one of death, Christ has brought a new age of life.³ This life is a dominion of power, a new order of existence--an existence of dynamic activity.

5) Quite in line with the foregoing is the term participation in Christ." To be a member of the corpus Christi is to be in Christ. Nygren warns against understanding this as a Platonic idea of participation in a noetic world. It is a "real participation." Christ is present "in a real way" in Word and sacrament. The church participates in a "real way" in Christ. This is focused upon two points--the death and the resurrection of Christ. As the death of Christ means the de-

¹Nygren, Christ and His Church, op. cit., p. 55.

²Nygren, This is the Church, op. cit., p. 8.

³Nygren, Commentary on Romans, op. cit., pp. 23ff.

struction of sin, so the church "dies daily to sin." Just as Christ's resurrection brought the life of a new age to this world, so the church daily invests itself with the new age, which is Christ.¹

The incorporation of the individual into this body comes about through baptism. The Christian loses his independent existence and becomes a member of Christ's body, just as the branch is grafted into the vine and becomes a part of it. This act of baptism spans the whole Christian life, for it is a continual dying and rising with Christ.²

6) Without in any sense intending to modify the preceding, it can be said, and indeed it is necessary to say, that this means also a fellowship of the Spirit. The gospel creates the church in its word of forgiveness. This is nothing other than God working through Christ reconciling man to himself.³ The "gesamtleben" of Schleiermacher is not meant but rather God himself at work. The forgiving and condemning love of God realizes itself in the sanctification of men. This is the life of the church, a continuous and unceasing forgiveness of sins--"a forgiveness which men receive from God and which they exercise mutually in forbearing and edifying one another."⁴ This fellowship is parallel to the corpus Christi but does not abrogate the divine reality of Christ as the primary concept.

¹Nygren, Christ and His Church, op. cit., p. 104.

²Ibid., p. 108.

³Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 334.

⁴Ibid., p. 335.

The foregoing may be described as a circling movement. The church is viewed from several angles but its center is never grasped. The innermost and deepest nature of the church cannot be discovered by the objective method of systematic theology. The "motivforskning" serves only as an apparatus which analyzes what is there. Only the eye of faith can really see "what" is there, and its inner compulsion has no adequate symbol to communicate what it sees.¹

With this ontological concept thus exhibited, the Lundensians are prepared to discuss other characteristics of the Church. Of special interest in the light of the complete objectivity of the reality of the church is the question of the relation of the church to the individual and to society. As may be expected, the endeavor to interpret these matters as implications of the Lundensians' basic view is in keeping with their understanding of the inner, organic unity of the Christian faith.

The Appearance of the Divine Reality in the World

The divine, living reality of the church cannot be thought of as an abstract idea in contrast to the historical church. The distinction between visible and invisible, essence and actual, has often been attempted in order to explain the obvious discrepancies between what the church confesses itself to be and what it appears to be. The Nicene Creed confesses the church to be one, holy, catholic, and

¹Ibid., p. 335.

apostolic. Yet it appears to be broken into many hostile camps, exhibiting obvious defects and weaknesses, betraying its universality by narrowness and exclusiveness and quarrelling incessantly about the meaning of its apostolicity. To distinguish between the ideal and the empirical might seem natural. The true church would be perfect, invisible and spiritual. The church which appears would be but an imperfect copy subject to faults.

These theories not only are unproductive in their efforts, but are not true to the church, says Aulen.¹ They have not clarified the problem but have rather obscured it and have contributed to the dissolution of the consciousness of the church. The essential church in this sense is only an abstraction and as a result the historical church developed into a human institution. Any such distinction between appearance and reality is patently false and finds no support in either the New Testament or in primitive Christianity. Aulen blames the Pietists for much of the difficulty in this regard.

The old confessions speak of but one church, a church which appears in the world as one, holy, ecumenical, and apostolic. The Lundensian understanding of the appearance of the church can be exemplified by examining these four terms.

1. The church is one

The church is one because Christ is one and the church

¹Ibid., p. 337.

is Christ.¹ Exactly the same thing is meant if one says that the unity of the church is in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The unity is ontological. It adheres to the nature of the reality itself. The fact that this reality is not always clearly apparent is not a criticism of the church but of those who view it from the wrong perspective. The church has the duty to overcome such misunderstandings and proclaim that its unity is in its Lord and not in its members.

To explain this in another way, the unity of Christ and His Spirit is expressed in the gospel. Christ creates the church through the gospel which appears in the form of Word and sacrament. The perversion of the gospel by men does not change its nature. It remains. The Lutheran Confessions are correct when they say that the unity of the church is a unity through the Word and sacraments.

With this principle in mind, the schemes of unity often proposed for the church can be judged. Unity can in no sense consist in organizational uniformity. An identical form for the church would not be harmful but would not guarantee or perpetuate any unity. It is quite possible, and indeed the present fact is, that the unity of the church does exist under different forms. This is an acknowledgment of the ability of the Spirit to create a uniform reality under various outward forms. The only principle involved in relating form to reality in the church is a pragmatic one. Any form which is elastic enough to serve the gospel in the

¹Ibid., p. 339.

best possible manner at different times and places is correct.¹

Most certainly the unity is not uniformity of doctrine. With such an objective approach to theology as this view espouses, a rigid, objective doctrine might have been expected, but the Lundensians consider that approach a denial of the character of faith. A finally formulated authority is a false objectivity, which turns into its opposite, complete subjectivity.²

Unity is not related to the uniformity of life, nor can it be based on any kind of subjectivity. The nature of God's reconciliation with men is, of course, based upon God's act of forgiveness, but this cannot be transformed into any fixed pattern and cannot require any kind of identity of religious experience or ethical quality. Any demand for this kind of uniformity would divide rather than unite the church.

The application of this understanding to the situation of the Lutheran churches is clear and has been spelled out in detail.³ Since the Lundensians consider their viewpoint confessionally Lutheran, they can say that Lutheranism is catholic, that is, it is a firm believer in the unity of the church as a fact. This obliges Lutherans to be active and interested in anything which would express or impress the

¹Ibid., p. 341.

²Ibid.

³See, as examples: Gustaf Aulen, "The Catholicity of Lutheranism," World Lutheranism of Today (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonesstyrelses B  kforlag, 1950), p. 3; Nygren, "Lutheranism and the Unity of the Church," This is the Church, op. cit., p. 322.

understanding of unity upon the church itself or upon the world outside of it. It is obvious that they are critical of other Lutherans who, conceiving of the church in a different way, have either isolationist attitudes or propound demands for unity that are at variance with what the Lundenians regard as the true nature of the church.

2. The church is holy

The church is holy because Christ is holy. The finished work of Christ made effective through His continuous work, the church, is perfect and holy. The church is not holy because of any institutional "goodness" or because of the character of its members. The Lutheran confession of the church as a communion of saints implies in no sense whatever the existence of a higher relative degree of human holiness, let alone any idea of human perfection.¹ Participants in the divine reality are being sanctified, yes, but it is the powers which sanctify them that make the church holy.

The holiness of the church implies an eschatological ground for the church. The church lives and works "in" this world but it is not "of" this world.² Any implication that the church is not responsibly connected with the world is denied. Rather, the ability of the church to serve this world is completely dependent upon its objective, otherworldly character.

¹Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 341.

²Ibid., pp. 343ff.

3. The church is ecumenical

"The church is ecumenical because the finished work of Christ is universal."¹ The work of Christ, both on the cross and in its continuous character as the church, is meant for all men. It has no boundaries of either time or space and no limits in its applicability to human affairs. The church is in its nature a universal brotherhood with no qualifications as to race, or social status. The church is wherever the Spirit is active. This activity is constantly changing. Therefore, the exact boundaries of the church can never be drawn. Any attempt to do so is useless and employs imaginary criteria.

The church cannot be limited by the human qualifications of those who claim membership. The privilege of baptism cannot in itself be considered any criterion. Both such attempts would limit the church's universality. God does create the church through baptism, but this is not the same as saying that the total number of baptized is the church.

Consistent with this, no distinction between believers and unbelievers defines the church. The church, properly speaking, and the church, improperly speaking, as described in the Augsburg Confession, cannot be interpreted to mean that some "in the church" are not really "in." The picture of two concentric circles, the larger including all the baptized and the smaller, inner circle, including the true believers, is not admissible. Even the unbelievers are under

¹ Ibid., p. 343.

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the hearing of the law and thus have been touched by the reality of the church.

4. The church is apostolic

The apostolicity of the church has a twofold perspective.¹ The gospel which creates the church must have messengers for its proclamation. The ministerial office of the church is necessary to the church and belongs to its nature. Similarly, the unbroken life of the church in history provides a continuity which binds these messengers to their source, the first apostolic messengers.

The implications brought to light by the appearance of the church in these four ways now require the further delineation of what are called the constitutive elements of the church.

The Constitutive Elements of the Church

The constitutive elements of the church are those factors or means which the Holy Spirit uses to create the church. Traditionally, these factors have been called means of grace. This phrase has its weaknesses for it often connotes a mechanistic conception of the ways in which the Spirit works. This the Lundensians in no way wish to imply. The means of grace have no standing or power of their own. They are means only insofar as the Spirit empowers them. They are "modes of God's immediate fellowship with man."² True to the fundamen-

¹ Ibid., p. 346.

² Ibid., p. 357.

tal motif, the means of grace are the love of God to man.¹ In this light, the constitutive elements are the Word of God, the sacraments, prayer, and the ministry.

1. The Word of God

"Principally the Word of God is Christ himself."² He is the Word in a unique sense. When Christ appeared in the world, the Word of God became incarnate, and it is this Word which is the foundation of the church, the constitutive element by which all others are to be judged. The Word is the "central means of grace in the church."³

This Word comes to man in different forms, the first of which is in a message. This message is a "self-impartation of divine love,"⁴ the direct voice of God speaking to man. The form is that of a human word, but it is nevertheless also God's Word for God is in it.⁵ The authenticity of this message is in the testimony of the Spirit and not in any external demonstration. The character of the Word is dynamic. The convicting and subduing power of the Spirit is inherent in the content of the Word. The Word is, therefore, in itself authoritative and it is a "direct expression of and actualizes" the

¹Ibid., p. 353.

²Gustaf Aulen, "The Church in the Light of the New Testament," Man's Disorder and God's Design (4 vols.; New York: Harper Bros., 1949), I, p. 22.

³Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 360.

⁴Ibid., p. 361.

⁵Ibid., p. 362.

divine Word.¹

The Word is anchored in the Bible which gives the various books their normative and fundamental character. This is not to imply that the Bible can be supported by any rational arguments in its claim to authority. The verbal inspiration theory is guilty of such "mechanical objectivizing."² On the other hand, no mystical or humanizing approach is tenable.³ The latter attitude tends to separate the Spirit from the Word, thus leaving the Bible completely human.

The message comes in two forms--law and gospel. The gospel is the foundation of the church, being in a different category from the law which is a part of creation. The law has universal significance and the church must guard its sanctity, but the gospel is the power which creates the church.

2. The sacraments

The sacraments are the self-impartation of divine love in another form, the form of action.⁴ Their significance lies wholly in the fact of their different form, not because of the mediation of any different love. Their importance is very great in the church, but this does not mean that God cannot mediate His love without the sacraments. Any limit upon God's power is an inadmissible rationalization of the agape. The

¹ Ibid.

² Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 264.

³ Ibid., p. 366.

⁴ Ibid., p. 370.

sacraments must be guarded against the same dangers as the Word--mechanistic materialization and spiritual dissolution.

The two sacraments of greatest importance are baptism, the sacrament of prevenient love,¹ and the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of suffering and victorious love.²

Baptism incorporates man into the church, not by bringing about a change in him, but by changing his status.³ Baptism implies gift, judgment, and obligation. Infant baptism, the principal form, does not demand the infusion of faith, which is a magical conception, but creates a fellowship which obligates a growth into faith, the failure of which brings the judgment of God. Baptism confers a right, a gift, a contact with the reality of the church, which becomes a lifetime inheritance.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of remembrance, sacrifice, fellowship, and thanksgiving. This sacrament brings the recipient into the "inner sanctuary of the gospel."⁴ Its character is that of a confession of faith in the finished work of Christ. The sacrifice is that of the Christ, now actualized and made real.⁵ No implication of a repeated sacrifice, such as the Roman Catholics teach, is meant, but rather a reference to the act of divine love made once and for all.

¹Ibid., p. 379.

²Ibid., p. 385.

³Ibid., p. 380.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 386.

The consecration to a life of sacrificial love by the celebrant follows this experience of the divine sacrifice.¹

The fellowship in the Lord's Supper is the sign of the church's victory. Christ is actively present as the one who is united to and who unites. The historical quarrels between the realistic and symbolic conception of the real presence are, to Aulen's mind, not useful in understanding its meaning. To him, the real presence is a "real act of Christ in the form of a symbol."² The presence gives forgiveness and assurance and creates love and concord among believers. The victory thus symbolized produces thanksgiving and jubilation. The Lord's Supper is essentially a message of joy.

3. Prayer

Prayer, too, is a constitutive element of the church for it is essential to the Christian life. The church ceases to exist if prayer is excluded.³ Prayer is both man's approach to God, prompted by the inner necessity of faith, and God's approach to man, the impartation of the agape. In man's approach, the purpose is not to change the will of God but to appropriate God's love and know His will. Prayer thus effects a change in the one who prays. In its highest form, prayer in this sense is adoration.

More profoundly, prayer is God's own act. Not only

¹Aulen has treated his idea here in detail in Eucharist and Sacrifice (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955).

²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 397.

³Ibid., p. 401.

does God speak to us, but it is He who does our speaking for us for "the Spirit maketh intercession for us."¹

4. The ministry

The ministry belongs to the esse of the church, not merely to the bene esse which is often misinterpreted as the Lutheran position.² There is a great difference between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran concept of what the ministry is, but not as to its necessity. The basis of the ministry is the great commission of Christ. This makes it a divine commission and roots it altogether in the saving work of God in Christ. The only authority it possesses is of Christ and this does not adhere to the person of the minister. The ministry is a service, and its only function is to serve the gospel.

The character of the ministry is one of reconciliation, for it began and has its only foundation in the atonement, God's act of reconciliation. The primary task is to proclaim the message of reconciliation through the Word and sacraments. The Word in both its forms, as a message and as action, requires the ministry for its proper function. The ministry is necessary for the church.

The Christian concept of the ministry is perverted when it is made a vehicle for the impartation of fixed doctrine or mechanized sacraments or when it concentrates upon the sharing of personal religious experiences. The ministry

¹Ibid., p. 497.

²Ibid., pp. 408ff.

is the proclamation of the Word in all its forms and is wedded solely to this dynamic calling.

The Relation of the Individual
to the Divine Reality

In maintaining the objective character of the church in its constitutive elements and rejecting every kind of subjectivism, the Lundensians may seem to leave the individual out of the picture. At this point it must be remembered that Aulen and Nygren are steering between the two poles, rationalism and pietism, both of which elevate the individual over community. The preoccupation with the objective character of the corpus Christi is, therefore, not unexpected. However, the individual is not forgotten. This school of Lutheran theology is quite conscious of his place in their theological scheme.

1. The corpus Christi and the individual

The church is primary in the relationship of the individual to the body of Christ. In agreement with Luther, Aulen asserts: "The church . . . is the mother who bears and fosters every individual Christian."¹ The Christian is completely dependent upon the church and the church is antecedent to him. The church "meets and enfolds" him in a "solidary interrelationship of blessing."² This interrelationship is one which is in opposition to his old status which was a "solidary interrelationship of sin." A glimpse into the un-

¹Ibid., p. 347.

²Ibid.

derstanding of sin is necessary to make this concept clear.

Sin is a religious concept and is understood and known only in the illumination of divine revelation, for its nature is that of a broken fellowship with God.¹ Faith is its opposite. In sin man is ruled by the power of his ego in rebellion against God. In faith, man places himself under God's rule. "The essence of sin, therefore, is negatively unbelief and positively egocentricity."²

The concept of sin is never clear when it is related to individual deeds in an atomistic fashion. The perverse direction of the will is the more profound description and "engulfs the whole man."³ The whole context of comprehensive human interrelationships becomes involved and sin expresses, therefore, a condition concerning not only the individual but the whole human race. It assumes the character of a demonic power which enslaves the whole creation.

The individual comes into the reality of the church when the dominion of this demonic enslaving power is broken and the dominion of Christ replaces it. Forgiveness is the means by which this becomes possible and becomes, therefore, the basis of the individual Christian life. ". . . Forgiveness is the divine act through which the divine and sovereign love subdues sinful man and incorporates him into fellowship

¹Ibid., p. 259.

²Ibid., p. 260.

³Ibid., p. 268.

with God," that is, the church.¹

The fellowship brought about is only a becoming.² It is characterized by struggle, conflict, and hope. Man is correctly defined by the phrase of Luther, "simul iustus et peccator."³

The church in all of this remains the reality which touches man with the possibility of the Christian life. The individual cannot come into contact with God without the church and he cannot live the Christian life without it.

2. Membership in the church

But how actually does this come about? At last resort, it rests on the call and election of God.⁴ The call comes essentially in baptism, although God is not limited in His means, for the call comes also in the preached word. Membership in the church cannot be defined in any kind of human qualification. Membership in the church is a gift, but it is a gift which involves an obligation.

The obligation thus imposed has two sides. The first is that of becoming more and more a living member of the body of Christ. The church is an ecclesia militans which is continually fighting against the demonic forces.⁵ The responsibility of resisting the encroachment of these powers in the

¹ Ibid., p. 288.

² Ibid., p. 323.

³ Ibid., p. 289.

⁴ Ibid., p. 350.

⁵ Ibid., p. 416.

individual's own life requires disciplining and the strengthening of the Christian life. This is done through the nourishment of the Word and sacraments. This at the same time equips the Christian for another responsibility, that of joining the church in its battle against the world. The goal is the extending of the reality of the church to all men and the establishment of peace and justice among men. The challenge in fulfilling this obligation is to love the neighbor and thus serve Christ.

In terms of the activity of the church, this evolves into two principal forms, evangelism and social missions, the winning of men for Christ and the acts of love in social life, education, political life, and in acts of mercy.

This last point involves society as a whole and must be described in further detail.

The Church and Society

Even though the church is a heavenly organism in and yet not of the world, it has a real and a responsible role in society. Two errors have been made in the past by Protestantism. On the one hand, there have been those who have separated the church and society completely. Ironically enough, this has been the attitude of both Lutheran scholasticism and pietism. Both withdrew from any active role or influence in society. On the other hand, the other extreme, that of the near identification of society with the church, making the church the sole source of justice and morality, is as thoroughly wrong. Both relationships are a confusion of

law and gospel, according to the Lundensians.

The Swedish school understands the relation of the church to society in two principal ways. First, the relationship to the state is conceived in terms of spheres of responsibility defined in terms of law. Second, the relationship of the church to society as a whole is described in terms of a calling.

1. The two kingdoms

First, the relation between the two spheres or realms of the church and the state must be established. Simply stated, the spiritual kingdom, the church, is the realm of the gospel and the worldly kingdom, the state, is the domain of the law.¹ Both of these are expressions of God's will. One is not secular and the other sacred. They are constituted by God for different purposes. The spiritual kingdom seeks to create Christians through the use of the gospel. This is its only instrument. The worldly kingdom seeks to maintain justice, and its instrument is the power of the sword.

The two kingdoms are to be true to themselves, carrying out their separate mandates without confusion or mixture of either purpose or instrument. The church is not to use the sword and, conversely, the state is not the agent of the gospel and must grant freedom of operation to the church. This does not, however, deny a real relationship. There is an intimate one in the very nature of the two kingdoms. The

¹Anders Nygren, "The State and the Church," This is the Church, op. cit., p. 298.

link which expresses this is the law.¹

2. The law and its use

The law, God's will for man, was born with creation and is universal in its application and significance. It is not a static collection of rules but a dynamis working in man everywhere.² The law preceded the church and was not abolished by the coming of Christ. The Christian, being "simul iustus et peccator" and remaining a citizen of the world kingdom, needs the law as much as ever for his own guidance and for the establishment of justice.³ A new purpose for the law is acquired after the Christ event. It is used to prepare the individual for the message of Christ by revealing to him his weakness, sin, and need for a new life. The church does not abrogate the law in passing into a new aeon for it remains in the old age as well. The great difference is that the law no longer is the way to God. That province remains entirely in the gospel.

The church, therefore, uses the law, understands it, and possesses it in both its universal significance and in its divine revelation. Its access to the law is more profound than that of the state.

The church, however, has no instrument to enforce the law or to create order out of chaos. This power remains solely in the hands of the state. The law, then, is a possession of

¹Aulen, Church, Law, and Society, op. cit., p. 2.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 5.

both kingdoms, but the gospel remains only in the spiritual kingdom.

3. The state and the church

The state in its possession of power has the responsibility to "withstand evil . . . to effect peace and good counsel . . . with justice."¹ In doing so it will carry out the will of God, whether or not it knows or acknowledges it. The temptation to misuse its power, to circumvent justice, or to disrupt the freedom of the gospel must be overcome with the help of the church. If the state misuses its power, it has lost its proper role. It is no longer the divine servant of God and must be changed. The Christian has the right to resist the state in his capacity as a citizen of the worldly kingdom. The church may resist also, although it cannot resist by force, for it possesses no sword.

The church has the double function of the teacher and the living conscience of the state.² The responsibility to correct the state, to guide it and to resist it is intrinsic to the church's nature but it must always do so as the church without assuming the role of the state.

4. Society and the church

As the state has the responsibility to administer justice, the church has a responsibility to preach the gospel to the total life of the community. This responsibility is the

¹Anders Nygren, "The State and the Church," This is the Church, op. cit., p. 305.

²Aulen, Church, Law, and Society, op. cit., pp. 93-111.

church's calling. In carrying out this calling, in permeating the whole life of the community and nation, the church bestows a religious character upon all the activities of the community. The Swedish people, in this idea, are not just a national grouping or a constitutional monarchy, but the people of God.¹ The church is planted in every district of the nation in such a way that the power of the gospel reaches every individual in baptism, in education, and in the continual preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. "There is not a place in Sweden where the church bell cannot be heard."² Because the gospel is there, so is Christ, and so, the church. The divine reality co-exists with the Swedish nation. This is the folk church.

This does not mean that the church is politically organized or under the control of the state. The Swedish church has always been relatively independent.³ The king is not the summus episcopus. The principle of cujus regio eius religio, so important in the German development, has not been accepted in Sweden. What it does mean is that all the people of Sweden are involved in the reality of Christ for all have been touched by it, even those who have not been baptized.⁴

¹Carlson, The Re-interpretation of Luther, op. cit., p. 23.

²A phrase used again and again by Olav Hartmann in a personal conversation with the writer in his effort to explain the folk church. Dr. Hartmann is the director of the famed Sigtuna Institute.

³Carlson, loc. cit.

⁴Aulen refers approvingly in The Faith of the Christian Church, op. cit., p. 345, to Ruben Josefsen's "The Church and

Those who have repudiated their baptism through neglect cannot be placed outside the church for the church is not defined in terms of its members but in terms of the presence of Christ. Those who have fallen away from the obligations of their baptism may at any time return to its promises. In any case, they are touched by the law. It is clear that such an individual is radically different from one who has faith but, nevertheless, he stands in the possibility of faith. God may have permitted those individuals to fall from faith. He awakens faith in others. "One who today bears fruit may be fruitless tomorrow; and one who today is fruitless may bear fruit tomorrow."¹ God is active in both cases. He acts within the church. It is possible to say that the church is present in all Sweden and that the Swedish population is the people of God for the gospel is everywhere preached. The reality of the church is not broken by the statistics which say who is and who is not at the moment faithful to his calling. It is the church's calling that determines its reality and this calling is to the whole people. The church is, therefore, a folk church, the people's church.

An Ontological Concept

The main interest of the Lundensians is that of delineating the nature of the being of the church. They are quite willing to concede the proper use of the traditional

Baptism," This is the Church, op. cit., where this theme is thoroughly presented.

¹Herbert Olsson, "The Church's Visibility and Invisibility," This is the Church, op. cit., p. 239.

terminology about the church--fellowship of the spirit, community of faith, etc.--but it is the reality that lies behind these obvious manifestations that they seek to describe. They propose that the church is the corpus Christi and by this they mean the equation of Christ and the church. The church is Christ. Christ is the church. This, to them, is the most profound and the most correct definition of church. It is quite possible to say, therefore, that the Lundensian concept is ontological in character. This does not necessarily imply a lack of the dynamic, for the Lundensians share in Luther's understanding of the living and dynamic Word of God, but the activity of this creative Word results in an entity whose chief characteristic is its reality, its "thingness," its being. This being may not be altogether comprehensive and may be known only to faith, but it is nevertheless a divine reality.

CHAPTER VI

THE PILGRIM PEOPLE

A Dynamic Concept of the Church

The church is constituted by the event of the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments, and so by Christ Himself, acting through and present in Gospel and Sacrament.¹

--Edmund Schlink on the church

The Neo-Lutherans

This chapter will consider the second "new" concept of the church in Lutheranism, that held by the neo-Lutherans. The name "neo-Lutheran" is chosen somewhat arbitrarily to designate the neo-confessionalist movement in Germany which arose as the consequence of the German church struggle and the influence of the new theological impulses from neo-orthodoxy and the new existentialist theology. The term was first applied to the neo-confessionalists of the nineteenth century and included such personages as Loehe, Vilmar, Kliefoth, and others. The Lundensians, described in the last chapter, have occasionally been referred to as "neo-Lutheran" also, and, broadly interpreted, this is quite correct. We shall limit our use of the designation, however, to the German school represented by such men as Werner Elert, Peter Brunner,

¹Edmund Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, ed. R. Newton Flew (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 61.

Ernst Kinder, and Edmund Schlink.¹

The neo-Lutherans are not a closeknit group such as the Lundensian school, and some members would resist the use of "new." They consider themselves traditional Lutherans, and feel that the suggestion of "new" is a criticism of their confessionalism. Others welcome the term and use it to separate themselves from repristination theology. We suggest the term, for lack of a better one, to designate the movement which has three basic aims: (1) the restoration of Lutheranism to its true confessional understanding by a re-examination of the Confessions; (2) the promotion of Lutheran participation in the ecumenical movement, thus fulfilling one of the missions of the church; (2) the communication of the gospel in the twentieth century with its peculiar problems. This requires further detail.

The neo-Lutherans are "neo-confessionalist," but in quite a different sense than their predecessors in the nineteenth century. They have no intention of repristinating the seventeenth century theology, nor do they have romanticist leanings. On the other hand, they have no pique against that century as, for example, the pietists do. They rather seek a new interpretation of what the Confessions mean in order better to meet the challenges which confront the church today. They believe that no tradition has formulated a better state-

¹The theological quarterly, Kerygma und Dogma, published by Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht in Göttingen, is a voice of the neo-Lutherans. Elert is deceased. Some non-Germans co-operating in this publication are N. A. Dahl of Norway, K. E. Skydsgaard and Regin Prenter of Denmark, Oscar Cullman of Switzerland, and Gustaf Wingren of Sweden.

ment of the gospel than the Confessions of the Lutheran Reformation, and that a return to these Confessions is the best alternative in a world full of relativism. The continuity of the church rests primarily upon the unchanging identity of the gospel. At the same time, they realize that the Confessions have not been interpreted properly and have often been grossly misunderstood. In any case, the new situation calls for a new emphasis. The advent of Biblical criticism makes the old orthodoxy impossible. The mounting crescendo of new theological ideas, many of which are good, must be assessed and related to the Lutheran understanding of the gospel.

The Neo-Lutheran movement can be further described as "ecumenical" and "church minded." It has rediscovered the church, and this rediscovery has been chiefly in terms of the church's dynamism and unity. All of theology is seen in the context of its significance for the church. The interest in theological problems is functional and not limited to a purely theoretical milieu. Having seen the church in great peril, these men have been awakened to the task of rehabilitating the worn-out and battered mechanisms of the church's life and directing it back to its proper path. To insure this, most of the Neo-Lutherans have been active in actual church work, such as serving on study commissions and committees in both their own church and in ecumenical enterprises.

Both of these aspects of the school are based on the deep belief that the gospel is related to history. Not only does God use historical events to shape and prod His church,

but the history of thought is a significant aid to understanding the gospel. Whereas the repristination school tends to reject the idea of development in theology, the neo-Lutherans consider new theological ideas as tools for use in communicating the gospel to an age which no longer thinks in the same way as its predecessors. Translated into specific terms, this means that the neo-Lutherans understand their experience in the German church struggle as a revelation from God, and they are influenced by new theological trends to a greater degree than their confessionalist fellows or fathers. These two items require further delineation.

1. The church struggle

The single most decisive factor in shaping the neo-Lutherans was the church struggle in Germany beginning in 1932.¹ Lasting until the end of World War II, this church struggle followed the efforts of the National Socialist Party to reduce the churches of Germany to instruments of national policy. This included not only the subservience of the churches to the government, but also the re-interpretation of the doctrines of the church to form a new religion which would serve the concepts and goals of Teutonic supremacy.²

The whole weight of governmental power was thrown against the churches with the express aim of suppressing and

¹Edmund Schlöcker, "The Witness of the German Church Struggle," Man's Disorder and God's Design, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft (4 vols.; New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), I, pp. 97-106, and Edmund Schlöcker, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., pp. 54-70.

²Ibid., p. 54.

destroying them.

The Church was not allowed to have any influence on public life, and it was debarred from access to the press and from the use of large halls. Religious instruction in school was either to a great extent abolished, or it was robbed of its biblical content. The theological faculties were allowed to atrophy, and the theological colleges were closed. The men and the young people were systematically severed from the Church, and forced into the Party; even the women and children who went to church were watched. The printing of Bibles, catechisms and hymn-books was prohibited, whole branches of church work were forbidden; Christian charity institutions were robbed, church leaders were deprived of their offices; and church order was largely destroyed. Hundreds of Evangelical pastors were taken away from their churches by the state police. Some of them suffered a martyr's death.¹

A large number of Christians acquiesced in these events in silence or feeble protest. Those who accepted the new religious ideas and their consequences were called German Christians. Those who resisted wholeheartedly became part of the "Confessing Church," a movement of Lutherans, Reformed and United Christians which operated through the period, beginning in 1934 after the Barmen Declaration.²

As Edmund Schlink describes it, two fundamental facts about the Protestant churches came to light. First, it was apparent that the people had lost a sense of urgency of the gospel. This was evident, not only in the great apostasy of both laity and clergy, but also by the easy conscience by which the majority of the people greeted the persecution,

¹Schlink, "The Witness of the German Church Struggle," Man's Disorder and God's Design, op. cit., I, p. 98.

²Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., pp. 54ff.

not only of the Jews, but of their fellow Christians. "Hardness of heart was more common than love." The gospel had lost its edge and the failure of Christian teaching for many generations stood exposed.

Second, the church had become more bourgeois than had been realized. God had been thought of primarily as the protector of an ordered family life and a "friend in the big events of life such as leaving school, marriage and death."¹ He had become a "guarantor of national and civic security."² The working class and the intellectual class had lost contact with the church almost altogether. The two kingdom concept of Luther had become hopelessly confused. The church was generally regarded as "either a function of the state or a pious ghetto."³

"The Third Reich was an apocalyptic experience."⁴ The church was revealed to be only an empty shell. "The church was like a tree, some of whose most healthy branches withered away while others seemed almost dead, put forth new shoots."⁵ Amidst the defection of many Christians and despite the seeming victory of the pagan cult of National Socialism, the church experienced an awakening.

Schlink saw this awakening taking place in several

¹Schlink, "The Witness of the German Church Struggle," Man's Disorder and God's Design, op. cit., I, p. 99.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 100.

⁵Ibid.

ways. There was finally new life in the church. With every conventional support taken away, Christians had to rely upon the "power of the Word" alone and in doing so began to understand its meaning for them.

Under the attack of 'neo-paganism', but especially through the power of God's Word, its promises and its demands, our usual attempts to see God's revelation in other historical events and forms, ideas and words, save in the historic event of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, completely broke down.¹

Natural theology had to be abandoned. Jesus Christ was recognized and acclaimed afresh as the sole Word of God, and one of the strongest Bible movements in the history of the church took place.

The sacraments assumed new meaning with the great increase in the number of celebrations and celebrants. The liturgy of the church came alive. The ministry was re-interpreted in the light of its true function of preaching. Christians began to see their responsibility to the world rather than living upon the security which the world gave to them.

The church itself was rediscovered through this process. It was recognized as a fellowship which grew in the meeting place around the Word and sacrament. The reality of the church was seen as that coming out of the experience of receiving the power of God through the means of grace, and in this the brotherhood of the church came alive.

Based on this new understanding of the church, the Confessing Church came into existence. The Barmen Declaration was the great banner that gave expression to the life

¹Ibid.

of the true church. For Schlink, Barmen said five things.¹ The Declaration was, first of all, an act of public witness. In bearing clear witness to Christ, it separated the Christians from collusion with political power. But at the same time, it became a confession of sin and a witness to divine judgment. In doing so, a fellowship was created across denominational lines which was in agreement with the unbroken fellowship of the church through the ages, and the true church was re-established. In the midst of this exhilarating experience of consensus in the gospel came the parallel understanding of the differences which divided the traditions.

Out of this triple result of new life centering around the rediscovery of the power of Christ in the means of grace, the act of confession as a necessary result of this life, and the experience of the unity of the Christian fellowship, came two questions not easily answered: First, what actually does constitute the church? Second, what is the real meaning and validity of the traditional Lutheran idea of consensus in doctrina? It was in the attempt to answer these two questions that the New Lutheran movement began.

2. The theological milieu

The "awakening" of the German churches during the church struggle was from a cultural Protestantism which had been dominant since the turn of the century. The Luther research had been well under way long before this, and Karl Barth's Commentary on Romans, generally acknowledged as the

¹ Ibid., pp. 105ff.

beginning of his influence, had been well-known for more than a decade, but it was the church struggle which made the results of both a live alternative for the churches. The classroom theology then became a part of the life of the church.

The German theological milieu out of which the Neo-Lutheran movement began and grew is too complex for a detailed analysis here. We have already summarized the results of the Luther research on the church in Chapter I. Of special interest at this juncture are the two great figures of the period from 1930 to 1960--Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. These two men are typical of the themes and the extremes of the main influences on the Neo-Lutherans.

Karl Barth's influence on the Neo-Lutherans came through three chief avenues: the dynamic concept of revelation; the character of dogmatics; the concept of the church.

Everything in Barth hinges upon his distinction of the three forms of the Word of God:¹ (1) The Word of God itself as revelation; (2) The witness of apostles and prophets as contained in the canon of the Bible; (3) The preaching witness of the church on the basis of the Biblical Word. Revelation is an "event"--the "event" through which God speaks to man, that is, proclaims to man what He wants him to hear. The actual occurrence of the revelation of God is identical with the exegetical question of what the Bible says. There can be no independent historical question. We cannot divine what really

¹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, trans. G. T. Thompson, Vol. I, Part 1: The Doctrine of the Word of God (-- vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. 98.

did happen behind the text of the Bible and disentangle the objective facts from the interpretations of them. We have the "event" of revelation only in the canon of the Bible. The dogmatic basis of this is the assumption that the real "event" takes place when the Word of God is preached in the church. Barth says, "Real proclamation thus means the Word of God preached,"¹ or more explicitly, "The Word of God . . . is the event itself, in which proclamation becomes real proclamation."² The viva vox evangelii must conform strictly to the content of the second form of the Word, the Scriptures. The foundation of the Christian faith is the Word of God in its written form, but it cannot be proclamation without being preached. Revelation therefore can never be divorced from action. It is an "event."

The relation between Barth and the neo-Lutherans on this point is not unlike that of Söderblom and Billing to the Lundensians. In both cases, quite independently of each other, it is Luther's dynamic understanding of the Word of God which becomes the basis of theology. In Barth's case, however, this dynamic Word is placed in a context of neo-scholasticism. Dogmatics is concerned with the question of truth. He begins his dogmatics with the thesis: "As a theological discipline, dogmatics is the scientific test to which the Christian Church puts herself regarding the language about God which is peculiar to her."³ In explaining this, he goes on to say, "She [the

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 104.

³Ibid., p. 1.

church] faces herself with the question of truth, i.e., she measures her action, her language about God, against her existence as a Church."¹ This is the same question with which the orthodoxists concerned themselves and made the formal principle of theology. The normative authority for dogmatics is the primary interest. It was easy, and even compelling, for the neo-Lutherans, in this setting, to take very seriously the witness of their fathers to the truth, i.e., the Confessions. They consider their work to be that of "testing" this truth.

The differences between Barth and the old scholasticism ought to be made clear, however. Whereas the post-Reformation fathers had relied upon a verbal inspiration theory (as had Calvin), as well as the complete correlation of the Biblical account with the historical events which were behind it, to bolster their absolute norm, Barth admits to the interweaving of historical and unhistorical elements in the Bible. He dismisses the problem of the historical Jesus. Furthermore, he rejects the hermeneutical principle of a canon within the canon with which to interpret the canon, as, for example, the principle of justification through faith alone. Barth's argument for a norm is completely circular. Hermann Diem suggests that for Barth "the history takes place rather in the witness of the text itself and hence can only be found within that witness."² Dogmatic formula cannot be equated with the truth of revelation itself. Barth therefore rejects the seven-

¹ Ibid., p. 2.

² Hermann Diem, Dogmatics, trans. Harold Knight (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), p. 95.

teenth century basis for their methodology but he accepts in principle the methodology itself. It is obvious that the first volume of his monumental Church Dogmatics should be entitled The Doctrine of the Word of God.

The consequence of this kind of prolegomena for a concept of the church follows in order. Barth goes so far as to call the church itself an "event"--"the event which consists in gathering together those men and women whom the living Lord Jesus Christ chooses and calls to be witnesses to the victory He has already won, and heralds to its future universal manifestation."¹ By "Ereignis" he means that the church is not constituted once and for all, but is continually being re-created by the activity of the revelation. The dynamic here involved is tied completely to the revelatory "event"--to that action by the sovereign Lord in which He lays His absolute obligation upon men. The church is the end result of the activity of the "event" in which the "event" deposited in Scripture "becomes effective and fruitful and its authority visible and intelligible."² It is an "event" which creates a human fellowship, a fellowship in which there is a concord of faith and creed and of love and its works. It is the history of the activity of this "event" which constitutes the church and which is "what the church is."³

Barth thus provides a new approach to the formal prin-

¹Karl Barth, "The Church--the Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ," Man's Disorder and God's Design, op. cit., p. 68.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 69.

ciple of the Reformation and applies it to the doctrine of the church. The New Lutherans, and especially Edmund Schlink, our subject for this chapter, adopt even the language of Barth in their doctrine of the church.

If we have been bold enough to call Barth a neo-scholastic, the same audacity prompts the assignment of the name "neo-pietist" to Rudolf Bultmann. If Barth is concerned with the truth of the Word of God as the norm for theology, Bultmann is as equally prepared to make sola fide, or more specifically, the "decision for faith," the last irreducible point of the theological structure.¹ It is the kerygma which is the Word of God, or, more precisely, the confrontation with the kerygma that is "all" of theology. Since the kerygma is completely unprovable, the scandal is overcome by the decision for faith which makes life over and gives it a new dimension and quality. Faith deprived of all security and support becomes certain of itself in the act of decision, that is, of believing. The complete objectivity of Barth is displaced by the complete subjectivity of Bultmann. For Bultmann, this means that historical criticism must be applied vigorously to get at the real kerygma of the text. And quite in line with this subjectivistic basis, Bultmann uses the categories of existentialist philosophy to convey the "demythologized" meaning of the kerygma. Whereas Barth revives the authority of the Word of God in the Bible, Bultmann takes the doctrine of justification through faith alone to its logical conclusion.

¹Rudolf Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), pp. 138-155.

The neo-Lutherans reject the radical form criticism which accompanies Bultmann's approach and accuse Bultmann of eliminating the historical foundations of the kerygma, or at the very least of reducing this foundation to the one irreducible fact of the death of Jesus.¹ But they find in Bultmann's emphasis upon faith a refreshing new emphasis of the material principle. As a consequence, they mediate the two extremes and find themselves adopting the principal presuppositions of both while dismissing some of the logical consequences.

The point at which the two extremes meet is in the agreement of the dynamic quality of preaching and the sacraments. The event of preaching calls forth the response of men, the decision of faith. Although the neo-Lutherans would consider both Barth and Bultmann guilty of underemphasizing or at least misunderstanding the real role of the sacraments, and see Bultmann's views as an overemphasis on the individualistic aspect of Christianity in contrast to Barth's discontinuous "gathered" community, they embrace the two extremes as helpful new emphases upon the two basic Reformation principles, the Word of God and faith.

3. The influence of the neo-Lutherans

The theological situation in Germany is so complex that an analysis of the real influence of any one of its multiple facets is outside the scope of this study. It is not possible to discuss German Lutheran theology as a theology sui generis.

¹Ernst Kinder (ed.), Ein Wort lutherischer Theologie zur Entmythologisierung (München: Evang. Pressverband für Bayern, 1952).

German theology as a whole is not determined by confessional adherence, but is interwoven with Reformed theology and with historical-critical, biblicistic and union schools. Within this fluid picture, the neo-Lutherans may be said to be the spokesmen for the confessional view. They represent the Lutherans in Germany in much the same way as the Lundensians represent Lutheran theology in Sweden. The old repristination school, so strong in the United States, has very few voices left among important theologians in Germany. The pietists, strong among the laity in some sections of the churches, have little influence in the church leadership. (The neo-pietism of Bultmann is rejected by the "classical" pietists.) The neo-Lutherans dominate the interest in the Confessions very nearly by default. This must be qualified by the knowledge that since the neo-Lutherans appeal both to the orthodoxists and the pietists in many of their ideas, the picture tends to blur, and one cannot be quite sure where one ends and the other begins.

The criticism of the neo-confessionalism of the neo-Lutherans comes mainly from the Lutherans in the Union Churches who fear a revival of the old orthodoxy and cannot seem to understand the real ecumenical interest of this new interpretation. The formation of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, embracing the old Lutheran territorial churches, was bitterly assailed as a contradiction to the inclusive Evangelical Church in Germany, which includes Union and Reformed Churches. The neo-Lutherans deny both charges and claim that their interest in the confessions and the formation of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church is an aid rather than a hindrance to ecumenical

A liturgical revival has also gripped the Lutheran Church. The beginning of this was in a small circle at Berneuchen headed by Wilhelm Staehlin. The influence has moved far beyond this small brotherhood, however, and has entered nearly every congregation. The Neo-Lutherans are wary of the romanticism implied by this, although they are not adverse to proper liturgical practice. Although the Neo-Lutherans themselves have engaged in serious and prolonged discussions with the Roman Catholics, they fear that some aspects of the liturgical movement, represented by such men as Hans Asmussen, place too little emphasis upon the Lutheran position.

The influence of the Neo-Lutherans in Scandinavia has not been great. The Lundensian school dominates the Lutheran concern in Sweden. The Norwegian interest in the Confessions is almost entirely confined to the pietist type described in Chapter IV plus a small revival of the repristination school. The works of Prenter and Skydsgaard have been of more importance in Denmark, but the influence on the church itself cannot be documented here,

The effect on the American Lutherans has been of more significance. Unfortunately no important translation of either Brunner or Schlink has yet appeared. Schlink's Theology of the Lutheran Confessions will soon appear, however, and Elert's Dogmatics and Althaus' The Christian Truth are said to be in preparation. The German writings have in the meantime been of increasing influence in the faculties of the Lutheran seminaries, particularly in those of the United Lutheran Church

and to some extent even in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The influence of the Neo-Lutherans in the Lutheran World Federation has been substantial and through its publication, Lutheran World, many articles by the German church theologians have been made available to the American churches.

There can be no doubt that the Neo-Lutherans' emphases are growing in importance in Lutheranism. The trend toward a revival of interest in the Confessions, while accompanied by an increasing participation in the ecumenical movement, is evident everywhere. In the face of this trend, there is a real question whether or not the repristination position can long claim a major voice in Lutheranism.

4. Edmund Schlink

Edmund Schlink (1903-) began his academic career at Giessen University in 1934 and served on the Faculty at the Kirchliche Hochschule at Bethel. He was active in the Confessing Church during the German church struggle. Since 1946 he has been professor of dogmatics and director of the Ecumenical Institute at Heidelberg University. We choose Schlink as the spokesman for the Neo-Lutherans because he has been their most articulate theologian on the concept of the church. His colleague on the Heidelberg Faculty, Peter Brunner, is as highly esteemed on the German scene and has written fully as much as Schlink on problems related to this subject, but his interest has been directed for the most part to certain internal problems of the German situation. Schlink has concerned himself with broader aspects of the questions. As Brunner has looked inward at his own church's particular concerns, Schlink has

been the voice speaking to the ecumenical movement. A prodigious contributor to ecumenical publications, he was a leading spokesman at the World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund, Sweden, in 1952 as well as at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, U. S. A., in 1954. His leadership is established by the fact that his work on the Lutheran Confessions, Theologie der Lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften,¹ published just after the War, is used widely as a dogmatics textbook in German Lutheran theological faculties.²

The characteristics of Schlink's approach to theology agree fully with the general Neo-Lutheran school already described. It can be called the confessional approach which at the same time believes itself to be fully ecumenical. In Schlink, this assumes a fully non-polemical posture. This is not a theology against anyone or anything, except Satan himself. It develops no case against any school of theology in past Lutheranism. Whenever necessary, Schlink is critical of this or that view, but the aim is to bring along in the present cause for theology any link with the past that is useful.

Three aspects of Schlink's relation to the history of thought are worth mentioning. His relation to Luther is similar to that of the seventeenth century orthodoxists. He sees Luther through the Confessions. For Schlink, the consensus of the Lutheran movement is best displayed in the written docu-

¹Edmund Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1948).

²Wolfgang Trillhaus, "Theology in Germany during the last Decade," The Lutheran World Review, Vol. I, No. 1 (July, 1948), p. 20.

ments of the Confessions. This, to him, is no disparagement of Doctor Martin, but is rather the proper way for a churchman to view his past and, moreover, the best method of interpreting Luther. The Confessions are the correct result of Luther's labors.

Second, his thought is definitely post-Kantian. Whereas Lundensian theology tries to establish religion as a category on a purely philosophical basis, and in this way displays its acceptance of the Kantian influence on thought, Schlink adopts the Barthian approach, which assigns to theology the role of standing on its own feet in relation to philosophy and recognizes its point of departure as being that of revelation with fully as much validity as philosophy's basis in reason. Theology can conduct a dialogue with philosophy if it cares to do so, although Schlink shows no such desire so far, but in any case, it does not wrap itself in the mantle of philosophy and become a quasi-philosophical monologue.

Third, Schlink is post-Kierkegaardian. He realizes that the problem of the subject-object split cannot be ignored and every statement which Schlink makes, however conventional its setting, presupposes the dialectical problem of the indefinableness of the being of God and the response of man to His action in history. He refuses to resolve the problem by aligning himself with either the dissolving of the ontological problem by modern existentialism or the "ostrich" attitude of the Aristotelian emphasis of old orthodoxy. He seeks rather to point to new paths of understanding the old truths.

With this general introduction, we proceed to an exam-

ination of Schlunk's concept of the church. Very important as background to this concept is his understanding of the "confession" in theology and his orientation toward the gospel.

The Confessional Approach to Theology

For Schlunk, theology begins with a confession. "To confess Jesus Christ means life in the Holy Spirit."¹ This confession of the Christ joins the stream of confessions in history to form a great consensus of witness to the gospel. Grounded in the Bible and given life by the action of the Word and the sacraments, the confession becomes the stand which the Christian takes in formulating his theology. It becomes the basis for his proclamation of the gospel to the world and the apologetic for recognizing heresy and the enemies of the church. The unity of the church is established by such a confession, both the unity of identity with the past and the unity of fellowship with the present church--a unity which can transcend certain written documents, although if a confession is a true one, its written counterpart is a contribution to the work and unity of the whole church.

1. The confession

What is meant by confession in this sense? We can describe Schlunk's view under nine points.

- 1) The confession is a response to the gospel.² It

¹Schlunk, "The Witness of the German Church Struggle," Man's Disorder and God's Design, I, p. 104.

²Schlunk, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., p. 60.

cannot be considered a means of grace, such as the Word and sacraments, but it is a necessary fruit of the work of the Spirit through these means. A confession is, therefore, always present where the gospel has been preached and, further, always present where the church exists. The confession is first of all an act, but it usually expresses itself in written formulae. This has been the history of the church--to express its confession in the ways and means called for by certain crises or needs of the particular time.

2) A confession becomes a public witness to Jesus Christ.¹ This is the way in which the Christians declare to the world that they belong to this Lord. It is the means that the church uses to make itself known in the world. As the action of the gospel creates the church and therefore constitutes it, the church relates itself to the world around it by responding to the gospel in a public confession.

3) By making such witness, the church cuts itself off from the world. It demonstrates that the confession has prior claim over it and that the world no longer exercises control. This at the same time clearly enunciates approval or disapproval of the other confessions of the day, the secular or pseudo-religious doctrines which seek control over the people. The confession is not isolated. It is not said in a vacuum. The character of its witness may even be determined by the situation to which it speaks. The confession is a sign of the struggle of the church against the powers of evil. The historical and never-

¹Schlink, "The Witness of the German Church Struggle," Man's Disorder and God's Design, op. cit., I, p. 105.

ending battle between the power of God and the power of Satan is waged using the weapons of the witness to Christ.

4) But this does not mean that the confession is addressed to the world alone. "It is also addressed to God for His own sake."¹ The praise of God is as primary an objective as that of witnessing. The confession is a hymn and a doxology as well as an apologetic.

5) Thus constituted, the confession must necessarily also be a confession of one's own sin. The testimony to grace must at the same time be a recognition of sin, for grace cannot be realized without repentance. The confession cannot be a claim to the possession of righteousness but rather an expose of the righteousness of Christ. There can be no pride of having discovered truth or the attitude of singular possession of truth.

6) When thus spoken to God and the world, the confession makes the church real and actual. When the confession is proclaimed, the church becomes visible, takes its place in the forces of history, and accomplishes its call. Further, it makes the one church real. In the struggle in the Third Reich, for example, the confession together of the Lutheran and Reformed, over and above their own written confessions, was a confession of the one gospel. In that moment, the one church received new life and made visible to the world the unity of Christendom.

7) The confession is not an act of an individual but

¹ Ibid.

an act of consensus of the whole church.¹ This consensus is one which is a consensus with the Bible and with the church of the ages as well as the confession of the church now. Not only the diversity of the church of the present, but the diversity of the whole history of the church becomes focused in a great uniting agreement concerning the gospel. The many disagreements and the various interpretations are overshadowed by the overriding and basic understanding of the Word of God.

8) The confession becomes, in this sense, obligatory for the whole church. Because it rises above the diverse elements and adheres to the gospel itself, the confession is not bound by time or space but becomes that factor which is necessary for the Christian and the church to accept and willingly to bind themselves.² The confessions are not obligatory because they are a consensus, but because as a consensus they point to the Bible. The obligation therefore does not rest with any particular formulation of the consensus but to the source, the Bible, and further, to the Christ there revealed.

9) The confessions must be the prolegomena to theology.³ This does not mean that dogmatics is simply the repristination of confessional theology. Theological research has the obligation to investigate every new areas of knowledge, to search every development and contribution in Biblical exegesis, in order to continue to expose the gospel to the glaring light of

¹Ibid.

²Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., p. 67.

³Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., p. 55.

honest scrutiny. It may even have to bring into question the confessions. This work includes historical research which continues to examine the fathers, especially those of the Reformation, in order to understand them better and to bring to light any errors or lack of understanding they exhibited. Nevertheless, until the confessions are proved to be in error, they must be the basis for the whole work of theology. No one, says Schlink, becomes a scholar before he is a student.¹ Every teacher must remain the child of his mother, the church. The gospel has been sounded in the church before. Let this be known and understood well before a new gospel is proclaimed.

2. The confessions and the Bible

The confessions attain this stature only because they find their norm in the Bible. They are nothing in themselves if they are not merely interpretations of the Bible. There are four principles involved in this relationship.

1) The only norm for doctrine is the canon of the Old and New Testaments. This is so even though there is no special article devoted to the normative significance of the Bible in the Lutheran Confessions. It is expressed rather in the viewpoint of the Confessions, namely, that they are witnesses to the central point of the Bible, the gospel.²

2) The Bible is normative because it communicates the good news of the Christ, the gospel.³ It has no value in itself

¹Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., p. 69.

²Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., p. 23.

³Ibid., p. 28.

outside of this purpose. The Bible is simply a witness to the event of Christ. Only insofar as it makes this witness is it of any significance. The Bible is the Word of God because it witnesses to the Word, the Christ. Whenever any confession witnesses to the Christ, it acknowledges its prior witness in the Bible and submits itself to the authority of this primary source of the gospel. The Confessions can never take the place of the Bible, nor supersede it, nor in any way diminish or change its uniqueness.

3) The confessions are summaries of the gospel found in the Bible. They are convenient abstracts of the essential message of the Bible.¹ This summary must necessarily be a witness to the gospel which is the message of the Bible. It cannot be merely a list of facts or interesting religious propositions. A confession to be a confession must be a contemporary confession of that which the Bible itself confesses, the lordship of Christ. As such it is a completely human act although its origin is in the activity of God. As a human act, it does not exhibit any of the divine attributes of the original witness of the prophetic and apostolic offices which produced the Bible.

4) If a confession correctly witnesses to the gospel, it can become a norm for the same reason the Bible is a norm, namely, that it submits itself to the gospel. A confession can be made obligatory for a teacher or a member of a church because it is a witness to the truth which is in the gospel, but only because it is a witness to a truth greater than itself, not because it claims truth for itself.

¹Ibid., p. 35.

3. The confessions and the church

What is the relation of a confession to the church? Take, for example, the Augsburg Confession. What is its role in Lutheranism? First, Schlink believes that this Confession lives up to the characteristics which have been outlined above. It therefore assumes an obligation for Lutherans and, indeed, for all of Christianity. The Augsburg Confession is not a party document written to promote an exclusive group. It is a confession of the gospel of the whole church--it is a confession of the una sancta. But it assumes a special obligation for Lutherans, because it proclaims for them just where the Word is being purely preached and where the sacraments are being rightly administered. For Lutherans, it becomes a mark of the church, not in the formal sense of the nota ecclesiae, for they are properly only the gospel and the sacraments, but because this Confession does exhibit clearly and correctly the gospel, it is a mark of the church in an "inferential sense," a mark "within the event." When the gospel is preached according to the Augustana, it is being preached according to the Bible. The Augsburg Confession can be judged a mark of the church because it coincides with the two primary marks.

This is not to say that the possession of this Confession is any virtue. It is de facto, not de jure, which makes it significant. The Word must actually be preached and the sacraments actually administered in accordance with the Bible in order to make the Augsburg Confession a real confession. And, in saying this, we have come full circle, for the Augsburg Confession is not the only confession which is a real

confession, but it is the confession in the peculiar history of Lutherans and so becomes binding for them.

Second, in living up to the requirements of a true confession and thus inflicting its binding qualities, the Augsburg Confession has a special message for this particular time. It implies for the Lutheran Church an "inescapable and lasting obligation within the ecumenical movement of our time."¹ On the one hand, this obligation is to adhere to the pure gospel. The unity of the church can be recognized only where consensus de doctrina evangelii exists, the consensus of the essential gospel of Christ. On the other hand, the Augsburg Confession means the "widest liberty for reunion with other churches."² It gives rise to "thought impulses towards unifying believers."³ Schlink sees this expressing itself in three ways.

1) The Augsburg Confession is a constant and radical challenge to the Lutheran Church. The confession of the Augsburg Confession is that the church exists where the "event" of the gospel takes place, and this is not only where the Augsburg Confession is known and held. The Augsburg Confession not only challenges the Lutheran Church to examine her own reality as a church, that is, to inquire as to whether the "event" is taking place within her own borders, but it forces Lutherans to see Christians everywhere around her. There can be no ecclesiastical self-glorification when security is not

¹Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., p. 67.

²Ibid., p. 69.

³Ibid.

based upon confessional possession but upon the action of the gospel.

2) This understanding of the Augsburg Confession requires faith in one holy church beyond the limits of the Lutheran Church. Even those who do not recognize the same limits to the Biblical canon can recognize one another as members of the one church, for the norm is not the Bible in any quantitative sense but the gospel. Confessional limitations do not limit the church. The Augsburg Confession requires Lutherans to break through all artificial boundaries and find the church where it is.

3) The allegiance to the Augsburg Confession required by the Confession itself is a liberation, for it is an allegiance to the gospel. It imposes no law of pure doctrine, but rather the joy of gospel proclamation. It frees the church from becoming doctrinaire. Whenever and if ever Biblical exegesis or some other development of understanding of the Biblical concept of the gospel requires that the Confession be supplemented or corrected, the Augsburg Confession requires that this be done for it submits itself entirely to the gospel. The result can only be freedom, thinks Schlunk--the freedom of the gospel itself.

The Gospel

If the confession of the gospel is the starting point of theology, and if agreement concerning the gospel is a mark of the unity of the church, the definition of the gospel assumes an overriding importance in an understanding of the

church. What does the term "the gospel" mean to Schlink? Simply stated, the gospel is Christ. It is the communication of the forgiveness of sin made possible by Christ and witnessed to in us by the Holy Spirit. But it cannot be so simply stated without further amplification. When the deepest understanding of the gospel is to be conveyed, there is involved the most intricate and profound theological subtleties. The exploration of three of these aspects is sufficient for this study.

1. The revelation of God the creator in law and gospel

The Lutheran Confessions have often been criticized for not having an explicit doctrine of creation. Those who say this, says Schlink, have not understood the gospel centeredness of the Confessions.¹ God is seen in the Confessions in the same sense as in the ancient creeds--as the maker of the heavens and earth. He is not revealed in His essence but as the God of action. What we know of God we know by virtue of what He has done. Luther's Small Catechism understands this perfectly when it says, "I believe that God has created me" That man is a creation of the good God is the gospel message of creation.² God is the protector and the provider for man, and of the concrete, whole living man, in both body and soul. He is, therefore, to be praised and thanked for His goodness.

But equally as important as the goodness of God in cre-

¹Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., p. 67.

²Ibid., p. 68.

ation is the revelation of God's wrath against the sinner.¹ Every man is wholly a sinner and stands under God's condemnation. "Sin is the reality of every man in every moment from the womb on."² This reality of original sin is grounded in the fact of the historical Fall.³ The manner of this Fall is not made explicit by Schlink. That is a matter for speculation, but the important thing is that man is both a creation of God and a wholly corrupt creature at one and the same time.

The recognition of this double character of man and the doubleness of God's attitude toward man can be known only through the revelatory acts of God. Natural man knows only "that" God is, not "who" God is. The knowledge of God's wrath is known only through the revelation of God's Law in the Bible. The knowledge of God's grace in the forgiveness in Jesus Christ is known only in the revelation in the acts recorded by the Bible. The knowledge of "who" God is, is possible only through faith in the gospel. There can be no natural revelation of what God really is outside of Christ. To know God, the creator, is to know the cross of Christ. To know God, the creator, is to have received life through the Holy Ghost.

This is the key to Schlink's understanding of the gospel. The gospel assumes a dialectical character from the very beginning. Indeed, all of theology for Schlink can be subsumed under four dialectical headings: law and gospel, sin and grace, judgment and forgiveness, God's wrath and God's mercy.

¹Ibid., p. 71.

²Ibid., p. 72.

³Ibid., p. 73.

Some of the details as to what this means can be displayed in a discussion of the relation of law and gospel. This forms the major part of Schlink's Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften. Schlink's understanding can be illustrated by summarizing the theses used in Chapters III and IV:¹

1) God's law finds its basic definition in the Bible in the decalog.

2) The law of God works in corrupt man either open resistance, works righteousness, or despair. The sinner cannot obey.

3) Through the law, God reveals His wrath over the sinner.

4) God's only Son became man, accomplished full obedience to the law, and died on the cross. He suffered God's wrath.

5) Jesus Christ has through His sufferings and death done enough for all sins and appeased God's wrath.

6) The sinner answers this deed of reconciliation with slander and cannot recognize how it serves his salvation.

7) God speaks to the sinner concerning Christ's accomplishment, not through the law but purely through grace.

8) The sinner becomes justified through faith alone without the work of the law. Faith is the response by man to God's action.

9) The believer is freed from the law because his faith is the work of the Holy Ghost.

¹Ibid., pp. 105-263.

10) The gospel is the word of forgiveness through which God makes the sinner righteous with Christ's righteousness.

11) Faith is not only the reception of this forgiveness but also new power in the heart which cannot abide sin. Righteousness is not only the imputation of the work of Christ but also a rebirth and cannot continue without a new obedience.

12) The rebirth is the renewal of the heart to a free decision of the will for God and a joyful consent to God's law.

13) The new obedience is not the work of the law but the fruit of the Holy Ghost.

14) Although the effectiveness of God's grace results in rebirth and new obedience, man remains in an unfulfilled state in this life. Because the law remains, the Christian recognizes that he is still a sinner.

15) The new righteousness does not take place as a consequence of the rebirth or the new obedience. The law and the gospel must be sharply differentiated even though each is revealed in the other. The new righteousness is a gift of the gospel and not a reward of obedience to the law.

16) God's work is primarily that of the gospel, even though the gospel is not effective without the law. The law, though God's authentic word, is a strange word, for God is love. The gospel is God's message for man and is revealed in the work of Christ.

In this series of conventional statements, Schlink can be seen trying to speak for the whole of Lutheranism, combin-

ing the orthodox and pietist tendencies. Adopting Anselm's theory of the satisfaction atonement, he attempts to avert the subject-object split by joining faith as a pure gift of the Holy Ghost with the psychological experiences of rebirth and the new attitude of the will.

2. The dialectic of ontology and personalism

Schlink has given a hint about the presuppositions which lie behind this dialectic approach in an article in Kerygma und Dogma entitled "Weisheit und Torheit."¹ He agrees that in Luther's paradoxes there is a frontal attack on the ontological foundations of Aristotelian thought. Luther's historically and existentially conditioned thought broke down the medieval-scholastic forms of thought. Schlink concludes:

The new and striking thing about Luther's theses is that he did not objectify the experience of justification, nor did he try to make it cohere with a given ontological pattern of thought, but remained content with the faith-experience itself and the human answer to God's address which it yielded, expounding this answer as if it were in the truest sense an exact theological statement.²

This attack did not succeed immediately, however, and was covered over by the influence of Melancthon and the universities, but under the onslaught of the modern natural sciences, the Aristotelian ontology became impossible. Schlink sees modern man standing "estranged from himself and solitary in the midst of a surrounding hostile nature and history."³ He welcomes

¹Edmund Schlink, "Weisheit und Torheit," Kerygma und Dogma, Vol. I, No. 1 (1955), pp. 1-22.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 11.

the contribution of existentialist philosophy in pointing out the characteristic consciousness of our time--"the consciousness of being enclasped by nothingness."¹

Schlink finds himself in a difficult position as a consequence of his acceptance of the written Word of God as the norm for theology and his acceptance of the correctness of the existentialist evaluation. On the one hand, he finds it necessary to speak about the being of God as an implication of the action of God in history, but finds it impossible to be explicit about the meaning of the answer of faith to this action. Somehow or other the two aspects, the personal and the ontological, must be combined constructively.

Schlink finds the same problem in Luther. He sees the personalistic emphasis in the "pro me" language of Luther quoted in the last section. At the same time, Luther cannot avoid thinking ontologically about the being of God. Schlink maintains that Luther speaks in personalistic terms in his anthropology and ontologically in his doctrine of God. Luther does not resolve the problem, or perhaps does not even understand it, except implicitly, but, of course, without being privileged to share in the philosophical development of the last three centuries he could not be expected to be explicit,

Schlink is tempted simply to put the two into a dialectic. As Gerhard Gloege says:

Ontological and personalistic thought are categorically and intrinsically distinct from each other and therefore must be distinguished; but on the other hand they are thematically and materially always bound up with each

¹ Ibid.

other and hence must be vitally related into a coherent whole.¹

There can be no ontology without personalism but, conversely, any personalistic thinking always presupposes an ontological foundation.

The tentative suggestion which Schlink has to make concerning the problem has not been fully developed, at least to this writer's knowledge. He suggests that the two poles of the paradox be fused by means of "doxology." "In the praise of God, in the glorification of His faithfulness shown in His government of the world from its beginning to its end, there arise necessarily constructive statements about the divine being."² Schlink does not, however, confine his definition of doxology to acts of worship, but considers it a "mode of personal existence." The personal experience of salvation demands a super-personal ontological statement transcending that experience. With no means either to express or understand the categories of this demand, the Christian stands in awe, and in this experience of awe envisions the dim possibilities of a solution to the contradiction.

At this point in his development, Schlink is unwilling to give up either the objective or the subjective aspects of the Christian faith. At the same time, he seems unable to resolve the dialectic and resists the pure dialectic of Barth and the existentialism of Bultmann. In the more practical

¹Gerhard Gloege, "Der theologische Personalismus als dogmatisches Problem," Evangelische Theologie (1955), pp. 23ff. Quoted by Hermann Diem, op. cit., p. 36.

²Schlink, "Weisheit und Torheit," Kerygma und Dogma, op. cit., p. 13.

terms of church life, Schlink projects the hope of assimilating the orthodox and pietist traditions into one theological system. This mediating position may have great consequences for Lutheranism. Whether or not it succeeds intellectually and theologically, it will ameliorate some of the tensions in Lutheranism and provide the possibility of a "break through" in the impasse in which orthodoxy and pietism now find themselves.

3. The sacraments

As the one Word of God comes to the sinner in a double address, that is, in both law and gospel, so the answer of the sinner has two sides, contrition and faith.¹ These two aspects of the response can be combined in the concept of repentance. Contrition is related to the law and faith to the gospel, and must be held in tension in the same way as law and gospel. They must be sharply differentiated and held together at the same time. This is a description of the life of the Christian--the tension of daily repentance. God's activity is continuous in the Christian. In addition to the preaching of the gospel, God acts through the sacraments, which can be called additional forms of His activity.

The Christian, in his daily repentance, looks back to the initiation of God's grace in his life, baptism. Baptism is an act whereby God awakens man, gives him forgiveness of sin, salvation from death and the devil, and eternal life.²

¹Ibid., p. 199.

²Ibid., p. 208.

Baptism, in accomplishing this, has two sides.¹ It is the offer of God's grace, an offer which carries with it the effecting of the offer--the promise of salvation which is at the same time the actual gift of salvation.² The heart of the baptismal action is therefore the reception by faith, which is the complete activity and gift of God.³ This gift is granted, not by the performance of the act itself, but by the activity of God in the act. Yet one can be assured that wherever the act is performed, there God is active. Baptism is therefore regenerative, but this must be understood in the continuing sense of the daily repentance which continues to make baptism effective. Baptism is a single act, but it is an action which is the beginning of action, without which the baptism has no effect.

In the same way, the Lord's Supper is a continuing action, whereby God comes to give the same gifts of life and salvation. The power of the sacrament is in the Word of God which empowers the act with its gifts.⁴ The Words of Institution are of great importance for they are the words which bring the Word.⁵

The heart of this sacrament is also forgiveness, for Christ's body and blood, the body and blood which give forgive-

¹ Ibid., p. 210.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 212.

⁴ Ibid., p. 216.

⁵ Ibid., p. 219.

ness of sins by virtue of the cross, are also given. The sacrament is the meeting with the same Christ who in the Word brings the gospel. Forgiveness is not only promised but it is actually present, for Christ is present.¹ Again, the power of the sacrament resides not in the act itself, although this must be performed, but in the Word which accompanies the act. Faith is the receiver of these gifts, faith which at the same time is awakened and strengthened.

The reality of the presence of Christ must be emphasized, but this reality must be understood as that of the risen and glorified Christ who is present in His full person.² This reality ought not to be confused with the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth, but it is at the same moment the incarnate nature of the Son of God which is both a divine and a human nature. In traditional Lutheran fashion, Schlink understands Christ's glorified state to be such that He can be present in both His divine and human nature according to His divine attribute of omnipresence.³

The Church as Event

The church is defined in Article VII of the Augustana as the "congregation of all believers among whom (or in which) the Gospel is rightly preached and the holy sacraments are rightly administered." This, Schlink believes, is a full, sufficient, and accurate definition of the church. It actually

¹Ibid., p. 222.

²Ibid., p. 256.

³Ibid., p. 259.

says two things: First, that the church is the fellowship of believers, that is, a community, and second, as a necessary corollary, that this fellowship is determined by that which happens in it.¹ The church is constituted by "event."

1. The determinative factor
of the church's essence

Schlink points out that it is the gospel which is mentioned in the Augustana definition and neither the Word of God in general nor the law.² And it is the gospel in connection with preaching--Schlink sees no difference between "preaching" used in the German text and "teaching" used in the Latin text.³ The gospel is placed in an existential form. It is the gospel as the verbal proclamation of forgiveness.⁴ That is to say, it is the gospel in action. Not the possession of the gospel is meant, but the "happening" of the gospel, its going forth, its dynamic aspect, its actual communication, and this implies the reception of its power.

In the same way, it is not the knowledge about the sacrament but the actual administration of the sacraments which becomes the determining factor. The actual celebration of the sacrament, which presupposes a reception of the elements in a liturgical setting in which the words of institution form the center, is what the Augustana means. The sac-

¹Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., p. 269.

²Ibid., p. 270.

³Supra,

⁴Ibid., p. 271.

raments are the voice of the gospel, too, when understood in this sense. They are the communication of God's message.

The gospel and the sacraments belong to the idea of the church and, therefore, to the very being of the church. They are the only means by which the Holy Ghost acts to create the church. The church is "event" in the sense that it is by these events that the church is made the church.

The important words are in qua, which connects the relative clause to the main clause in the definition. This implies two things for Schlink.¹ First, as already suggested, the gospel and the sacraments are in the assembly of believers as the means through which God creates the community itself. They are the powers which, in the midst of the community, are its source of being. Second, they are in the community in that they are the means by which the community carries out its task. They are the life of the community as well as its source. The church exists in a double relation to the "event." The church is created by it and the church uses it and is its steward. The church is both the mother of the Christian and comes before him, and at the same time is that which is there by virtue of the Christian being there. The church is previous to faith but it also is that which comes into being as the result of faith. There can be no church without faith but there can be no faith without the preaching of the gospel which happens in the church.

The relative clause belongs inseparably with the main clause. Neither is complete without the other. The relative

¹ Ibid., p. 272.

clause adds nothing new to the expression, congregation of believers, but rather is its definition.

Schlink considers it important to point out that there is no mention of the ministry here and purposely so, since the ministry is dealt with in Articles V, XIV, and XXVIII. This is to make sure that the ministry remains the servant of the gospel. There can be no thought that the ministry can be divorced from the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, and in that sense the ministry is implicitly contained in Article VII also. But it is deliberate that the attention is focused on God's action in the gospel and thus "it becomes clear that the office is no independently existing institution but is at the service of the gospel alone."¹ This eliminates the possibility of the false ontology of the church found in Roman Catholicism and to some extent in Eastern Orthodoxy and Anglicanism.

It is further noted that neither the Confessions nor the Bible are included. The confession is a fruit of the event of the gospel and not its means. A confession does not create the church or determine its boundaries. A confession is rather part of the life of the church that is already in being. The principle of sola scriptura is, of course, assumed in the Augustana and it must also be concluded that the meaning of rechte can only be related to conformity to the Bible, and nothing else, yet it is not the Bible itself which makes the church the church but the gospel of the Bible in action.

¹Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., p. 60.

It is nearly presumptuous to note that the church is not defined as a community in which good works are done. They are not to be excluded but are the result of the church and neither the determining factor nor the definitive expression of its character.

Thus the church is constituted by the event of the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments, and so by Christ himself acting through and present in Gospel and Sacraments. The church does not exist where men possess Bible, Confession and Ministry and yet keep silent but rather where on the basis of Scripture and in agreement with our Fathers and brethren the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments celebrated where the voice of God is heard and Christ offers himself.¹

2. The church as community

It is possible to say, having understood this, that the church is the congregatio sanctorum. The church is the believers, the saints, those who share with one another the fellowship of the gospel, those who have responded in faith to the call and by it have been brought to a new life.² The community thus created is defined, therefore, in terms of both faith and love, in terms of not only a receiving but a doing, a fruit bearing of faith. The reality of the church does not allow the separation of justification and sanctification in the sense that justification only is necessary to the church.

The presence of love assures that the community is one in which the members participate in one another. They must gemein werden.³ They share both a common grace and common

¹ Ibid., p. 61.

² Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., p. 277.

³ Ibid., p. 278.

burdens. This giving of one's self to each other and working for one another in love has its origin, however, in a common hearing of the gospel, through which the Holy Spirit sends love and faith, which, in turn, unites the believers in one love. It is this gift of the Spirit which makes them holy and enables them to carry out the fruit of faith and make the community one of sharing in love.

The church is, then, the true people of God. In such a description, the genitive must be emphasized. They are His people, His work and possession. They can, indeed, be called Christ's living body, or Christ's bride.¹

Although this community may most naturally be understood as the local unit, the congregation, yet it is quite clear that it is all believers that is meant, all Christendom. Even though the church in a specific locale is the church, the church must at the same time be thought of as the whole of Christendom. The Augustana quite properly safeguards the church from too much emphasis upon the independent and local unit, Schlink says. To isolate the congregation from the wholeness of the church is to betray the Augustana's understanding of fellowship and community.²

Further, this community is neither a succession of individual acts or events without any real continuity, nor an invisible fellowship devoid of an ontology. Any reference to an institution erects the image of a false ontology, but to go

¹ Ibid., p. 236.

² Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., p. 61.

to the opposite extreme and deny the ordinary aspects of community, that is, its reality in society, its visible marks, is no better. To submerge the church into a spiritual or supernatural reality which exists only in a vertical relation to God and only in the present moment is also denying the Lutheran meaning. The church is visible for the "event" always produces results, the people of God, and it is a continuing community which does not only exist only in the moment of its creation. The identity of the gospel is the guarantee of the apostolic succession. The church continues to exist in the swift moving moments of the historical process because it has an historical base, the apostolic gospel. The church through all time and change preaches and believes the gospel. In doing so it is being apostolic and will persist until the end. This is a sufficient statement on the ontology of the church. To say more is not only difficult but dangerous. The church is the people of God, a pilgrim people.

The Church as One

The church is una sancta, for it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. As holy, catholic and apostolic, it is essentially one. It is one in its holiness, for there is the one Holy Spirit which operates in her. It is one in its catholicity, for the one Christ rules her. As the apostolic church it is also one for it has the "one unshakeable foundation of the office of the Apostles."¹ And this unity of the church, as the Augustana says, "must always be and remain." The one-

¹ Ibid., p. 61.

ness is not a future goal or an imposed task. It belongs to the essence of the church. The una sancta is not merely a transcendent possibility on the other side of time. If the church exists now, then it exists as one church.¹

1. Unity and diversity

The oneness of the church thus described is not to be confused with uniformity in all customs and traditions. It is not necessary, as the Confessions state, that similar ceremonies be set up by men. This does not only mean the specific festivals and celebrations connected with liturgical worship but everything which is a part of the legislation of the church, either the structure of church government or the ordinance of worship services. Unity constituted by human personality is neither necessary nor even desirable. Traditions within the church may differ in all these matters. Such diversity is inherent in the freedom of faith.

In this diversity the church may develop different relationships to the society about it at different times and places. It may order its own regulatory principles as the peculiar circumstances of a given situation demand. At the same time, the similarity of cultural ordinances is not necessarily forbidden and the striving for an identity of form cannot be forbidden. The good ordering and tranquil development of the church may indeed demand this and should such equality be achieved it should be accepted with pleasure and thankful-

¹Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., pp. 278ff.

ness. Diversity, therefore, is neither necessary nor unnecessary to the church's being. Unity in form may enhance the oneness of the church but it cannot create it or sustain it. On the contrary, should conformity be demanded, in that "moment when it is claimed to be of necessity, it would be the work of the Devil."¹

2. Unity and uniformity

At the same time as he insists upon this freedom Schlink admits that there is a peculiar compulsiveness about the necessity of certain kinds of uniformity. Agreement concerning the gospel and the administration of the sacraments is a type of uniformity in form. To this kind of uniformity, the unity of the church is related. This uniformity is that of the confession. "Das Bekenntnis ist ja nichts anderes als die einmütige schriftgemässe Bestimmung des 'pure' und 'rechte' der Evangeliumspredigt und Sakramentsverwaltung. . ."² The confession is that which grows out of the harmony of gospel preaching and faith and then turns about to serve the unity of the church. The only uniformity which is necessary to unity is the uniformity concerning that which is the unity, namely, the gospel of forgiveness and the power of the sacraments. It is this uniformity which identifies the church with the Fathers and establishes her holiness and which fastens her eyes upon the Christ and thus reveals the unity. This, says Schlink, is confession.

¹Ibid., p. 280.

²Ibid., p. 281.

"Unity of the church is not possible without the unity of confession."¹ This statement is proper in the light of the understanding that the confession is a confession only in its actualization in the preached gospel and that it encompasses only the content of the gospel and does not rely upon form of expression or details unnecessary to salvation. The presence of written confessional writings is not required although the church is blessed where this occurs. For this reason, the position of the Lutherans in the ecumenical movement must be to place the question of the gospel in its most incisive and disturbing form in the center of discussion.

This relation of unity and uniformity does not do harm to the catholicity of the church. Unity and universality are identical.² Wherever Jesus Christ has been received, there the church is in her unity for there the confession is made in response to the gospel.

3. Unity within the unity

The problem remains concerning the unity within the church's very being. Schlink reminds us that the devil is still the ruler of the world and that inside the fellowship of the Christian fellowship there are godless, evil and hypocritical people. There are those who participate in the hearing of the gospel, receive the sacraments and confess the faith, but are nevertheless allies of the evil one. Christ has not been received by them. These people may be in the pulpits as well as

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 284.

in the pews, in church offices as well as in unnoticed corners. The battlefront of the church runs right through the unity, says Schlink.¹ The boundary of the church is no hard and fast border easily definable and recognizable. The devil may speak of love and even interpret God's love to us.

How is a situation like this incorporated into a concept of unity? On the one hand, these wolves in sheep's clothing are not to be considered part of the church in being. They threaten the fellowship with destruction. Whenever they are revealed by their patently false teaching or immoral lives, the church must act to excommunicate them. The power of the keys is a double power. The church has the right both to forgive and to withhold forgiveness.² To implement the negative power is most difficult, however, and must be done carefully. Simple error or vain opinions from weak individuals must not be mistaken for a real disruption of unity. Only the deliberate denial and desecration of the foundation in Christ can be serious enough to call for the drastic measures of excommunication. Every speculation is not pernicious error. Excommunication can only be in effect when the gospel itself is put aside.

On the other hand, there will always be disunity within the unity of the church. There can be no pure church. The church is no less the church because hypocrites are in it. The unity does not depend upon any quantitative concept. The church

¹Ibid., p. 285.

²Ibid., p. 287.

must endure evil men in its midst and learn to tolerate the tares among the wheat. Not only is it impossible for men to bring to an end the mixture of saint and sinner in the church, but they should not do it.¹ When the church renounces the attempt to distinguish between the evil and the good to the degree that each man is under its judgment and when it ceases to exclude every evil man through some special method of separation, it honors its Lord. Only in the last day, in the province of the Lord's own judgment, can such separation be done. It is in this sense that the Confessions make the distinction between the ecclesia proprie dicta and the ecclesia large dicta.

4. The marks of the unity

Even though certain distinctions concerning the church must be made theoretically, such as that of the hiddenness of the true church in the church, the reality of the church on earth is recognized in the marks of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. The "event" is real and visible. The church is not an ideal toward which the Christian strives. It was here before the Christian and it is real for the Christian. The marks of this reality are not tacked on to the church as a visible manifestation of an invisible reality. They are the church itself. The church is recognized through its message, its love, and its participation in the "event" of her creation and sustenance. A distinction can also be made between the problem of the recognition of the members of the church and the task of recognizing

¹ Ibid., p. 289.

the church itself, even though the church is never separated from its members. The recognition of the "church in being" is possible because of her "marks," the notae ecclesiae.

The notae ecclesiae are emphasized in an exclusive sense.¹ Even as they are fundamental for the church in both a causative and a persistence sense, so they are fundamental to the church's being in a cognitive sense. The church is known by her marks. They are infallible signs of her existence, but they must be distinguished from the other signs of the church which are not exclusively necessary to her existence. The exhibition of good works, for example, although always a fruit of faith and therefore always present, can also be a part of the life of unbelievers and are not thus infallible guides to the presence of the church. And, even though good order is desirable for the church, it cannot be called a characteristic mark of its being. In the same way, neither the ministry nor the relations to the state nor church discipline can be called notae ecclesiae.

Confessional documents cannot be called marks of the church but this must be understood in a special way, says Schlink.² Since the act of confessing is always a public declaration of that which is the mark, namely, the gospel, it is so close to the mark as almost to be indistinguishable from it. Schlink himself is tempted to think of the confessional documents as a third nota ecclesiae or at least as nota eccle-

¹ Ibid., pp. 295ff.

² Schlink, "The Lutheran Churches," The Nature of the Church, op. cit., pp. 66ff.

siae in an inferential sense, as earlier suggested in this chapter.¹ He is not certain at this point, however, for he recognizes the great dangers. The church exists where there are no particular confessional documents even though he would consider such documents valuable. And, too, the confessional documents are always subject to revision and cannot be relied upon as the certain prerequisite of the persistence of the church. If the understanding of confession could be confined entirely to the act of confessing, the possibility of recognizing the confession as being within the mark of the gospel could be further explored. As it is, he is only willing to say that the confessions are marks of the church insofar as they are within the two marks, that is, insofar as they coincide with the notae ecclesiae proper.

4. The church and the churches

The relation between the church and the churches, that is, the one and universal church with the historical or empirical churches, is not fully explored by Schlink and the implication is that it is purposely left vague. Schlink quite obviously is a Lutheran because he believes that the Lutheran tradition has captured the gospel in a fuller sense than any other tradition. This gospel is masterfully defined in the Lutheran Confessions. This attitude reminds us of the Loehe view which called the Lutheran Church the "church par excellence" because it had confessions which were in complete harmony with the Bible. Schlink, however, would not go this far for although

¹Supra, p.

he would tend to think that the Lutheran Confessions do embody the correct exposition of the gospel, he would not therefore conclude that the Lutheran Church has always lived up to this fine tradition. Instead, his German church struggle experience taught him that the mere possession of a correct confession is no guarantee of a correct adherence to it. On the contrary, Schlink sees the possibility of an empirical church not possessing a good confession, or perhaps any confession at all, yet maintaining a closer relationship to the true gospel than the historical church which had the right confession in written form. In his view, any organized church body which has even the minimal confession of Christ as Saviour and Lord has the right to be called a church, even though the hiddenness of the church only becomes fully visible and real when the fullest confession of the whole gospel is evidenced. Schlink is careful, however, only to admit this possibility and prefers to make no specific judgments. Such judgments can come only after long and exhaustive investigation--an investigation which could serve no really useful purpose. He would rather delve more deeply into the gospel's meaning in a common effort with those who have come from differing traditions.

The most dramatic display of this attitude is in Schlink's discussion of the intercommunion problem.¹ He says that the refusal to practice intercommunion because of differences in the doctrine of the Holy Communion is an indica-

¹Edmund Schlink, "Lord's Supper or Church's Supper," Intercommunion, Donald Baillie and John Marsh, eds. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), pp. 296-302.

tion that men have taken over the sacrament themselves and have adopted an excessive dogmatism that is without foundation in the Bible.¹ "We cannot denounce all those who celebrate the Lord's Supper apart from the communion of our own Church as not being receivers and members of the body of Christ, neither can we denounce those who desire intercommunion beyond the limits of their own Church as individualists who misjudge the ecclesiological significance of Holy Communion and therefore distort the Lord's Supper."² He excoriates his own tradition for its lack of interest and understanding in the difficult problem of intercommunion and looks forward to a progressive recognition of ministries and orders which would make intercommunion possible.³

In maintaining this fluid position in the problem of the relation of the church and the churches, Schlink is able to project the double image of great freedom in dealing with and recognizing the validity of all churches and at the same time insisting on consensus in doctrina. He also places himself within the spirit of the Augustana in refusing to define the boundaries of the churches with any definiteness and in concentrating the attention upon the source and center of the church's being. He sees the question with which to deal as that of the "whereness" of the church and not its "whatness." The dynamic quality of God's activity creating and sustaining this community is the real key to the church's being, a being

¹ Ibid., p. 301.

² Ibid., p. 298.

³ Ibid., p. 302.

which is incapable of any further description than the phrase "the people of God." The ontology of the church cannot be avoided but neither can it be fully explained. We know of the church through the marks of her being and not through a complete comprehension of the being in itself.

The Pilgrim People

All that has been said about the church would be meaningless if it were not understood in the context of the eschatological perspective. "The church is on her way between the first and second advent of Christ. She is on her pilgrimage toward her Master who is coming again."¹ Not only is the church constituted by an "event" in the present which is linked both in continuity and identity with the past "event" of the Christ, but she is also inescapably related to the future, to that "event" called the last day. The church does not know what will happen during the history that lies between the present moment and that future end, nor does she understand in what manner this end might come, but she is certain that there is an end and at that end stands the Lord of the world and her Lord who will effect the consummation of His history. Towards this end her life must be pointed. Redemption is completed by judgment, judgment not only of the world but also of the church. The church is a pilgrim people.

¹Edmund Schlink, "The Task of Faith and Order in a Pilgrim Church," The Third World Conference on Faith and Order (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1953), p. 151.

1. The kingdom of the Devil and
the kingdom of Christ

The eschatological perspective of the church's life is seen clearly in the bitter battle which rages both about her and within her borders between the kingdom of the devil, recognizable in the universal reality of sin, and the kingdom of Christ, whose reality can be seen in the church. Mankind is imprisoned in the grip of the devil. "The lack of the freedom of the human will is an anthropological fact."¹ Mankind is insensitized to the kingdom of Christ. The world's history is a witness to the power of the tyrannical force of the devil. This is not to equate the world with the devil's lordship over men even though he has such a grip upon it that he guides the apparent history of the world. The world is still upheld by God in spite of its bondage, and the differentiation between God's authority and the temporary rule of sin must be maintained. Yet the world at present is subject to the universal tyranny of sin and death.

Over against this tyranny is the kingdom of Christ, the rule of righteousness and life. While the devil's kingdom enslaves the world to a sphere of death, Christ's kingdom frees the world to a realm of life. The two kingdoms are distinguished both by their character and ends as well as by the "personalities" of their respective lords. The devil is lord in the sense of the tyrant who rules absolutely. Christ is lord in a paradoxical sense. While he is a lord as absolute as the devil, indeed, even more so, yet He is also a servant

¹Ibid., p. 264.

of those He rules. Rather than requiring them to die for Him, He dies for them and grants life rather than death, freedom rather than slavery.

The church exists in the midst of the battle between these two powers. The battle is not stationary for a second. There is a constant encounter, "conquering and re-conquering, attacking and counterattacking, capturing, freeing, and in given situations, taking prisoner again."¹ History is the great stage of the dynamic forces which are playing for a final, all-embracing victory. The church does not understand herself until she sees herself as a part of this gigantic struggle. Unless she fixes her eyes upon the outcome, her mission and her goal are obscured and even obliterated. The dynamic of her nature is accentuated by her knowledge of her role in the great drama.

2. The worldly power and the spiritual power

The church's role is not clearly seen when it is elucidated only along the lines of a simple good versus evil battle. Her relationships with the world are not limited to those of an alliance with Christ against the devil. The devil's kingdom is not to be identified with the world. We may speak of a worldly power, a structure ordained by God to establish justice and peace in the world aside from the eventual victory to be won through the church. The worldly power is that of the sword, God's order of creation ordained to maintain order in an

¹Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., p. 268.

anarchical world, in simpler language, the state.¹

The place of the state in history is best understood in its relation to the church, or in language suitable to this relationship, the spiritual power. While the worldly power is characterized by the power of the sword, the spiritual power is recognized as the office of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.² Both powers are God's creation and both have their source and authority from God. God is active in both spheres. In this sense, the worldly power is good for it is God's power. It is God's order as much as His spiritual power. Whether or not the origin of the worldly power is before the Fall or whether it was made necessary by the Fall is a moot question to Schlink. It is part of the structure of our existence, a way in which God chooses to relate himself to the present stage of history.

While the spiritual office has its origin specifically in the call of the apostles by Christ, the worldly power has a more generalized origin in God's activity in His creation. Both have their respective roles and tasks clearly revealed in God's Word in the Bible.³ In both cases, it is the will of God which is to be served. In neither case is the exact form of the concrete order revealed in detail. As the ministry of the church is left free as to form, so also is the exact form of the state's call to carry out its task left to men.

¹Ibid., pp. 306ff.

²Ibid., p. 310.

³Ibid., p. 334.

The relationship of men to each power is that of obedience.¹ The obedience to the spiritual power is that of faith, faith in the gospel. The obedience to the worldly power is that of obedience to law, which is obedience to the ruler of the state, who is in turn responsible to God for the conduct of his office. Obedience for the Christian is grounded in his obedience to God. The two powers take their places alongside each other, differentiated as to function and method, but responsible to God and claiming the right of obedience of all men.

Although similar in these respects, the two powers are to be sharply differentiated. They ought not to be co-mingled.² Only tyranny can result from the wrong relationship of the two. The spiritual power is not to make the state its servant, nor can the worldly power make the church subservient to it. The guarantee for the proper separation of the two, and the standard by which each is to be measured as to its task, is God's law.³ There are boundaries beyond which neither can go. The freedom of the church is a freedom born only in its being bound to the gospel. Beyond this freedom, she cannot go. The rights of the state, in the same way, are bound to the justice of God's will. Beyond this justice, it cannot go. The right of the Christian to refuse obedience to the state which goes beyond its rightful limits is dear to Schlink, but the right of the Christian to rebel against such a state is not admitted.

¹Ibid., p. 350.

²Ibid., p. 356.

³Ibid., p. 361.

3. The last day

The church is oriented towards the last day. "The confession of the church is an eschatological witness."¹ The expectation of the consummation of all things is inherent in every phase of the church's life and faith. The last day is awaited and witnessed to by the paradoxical nature of the church, in the paradox of the divine creation of man and his depravity, in the paradox of law and gospel, in the paradox of the true church and the outer church fellowship, in the paradox of worldly and spiritual powers. These tensions can be accepted and even accentuated in the present because the church's faith posits their resolution in a final victory.

The gospel and the sacraments also testify to the eschaton and are foretastes of the final victory. The eternal life of the future is experienced in the present life given by the preaching of the gospel. The Lord's Supper is the symbolic acknowledgment of the great banquet at the eschaton. It is the fellowship of a pilgrim church, a witness to its faith in the final victory and fellowship.

Just exactly what Schlink means by the "last day" is problematical. This was never made very clear in the many conversations and documents which led to a famous debate between Schlink and Robert Calhoun at the Evanston meeting of the World Council of Churches.² Calhoun adopted an attitude similar to that of the realized eschatology of C. H. Dodd.

¹Ibid., pp. 365ff.

²W. A. Visser 't Hooft, ed. The Evanston Report (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954).

Schlink definitely rejected this view as he would also presumably the existential interpretation of Rudolf Bultmann. For Schlink the last day refers to the return in history of the Christ who is the lord of history, the victor over death.¹ It includes the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of all men, and the beginning of the life everlasting. These elements are placed within history, that is, they are events which will occur in the framework of time and space. Just as the Fall was interpreted historically by Schlink, so the end of history assumes historicity. The details of these events, however, are of little interest to Schlink. He most certainly would reject any kind of millennialism. His main interest is that of assuring the hope of the church by placing great confidence in the actions of God in future history. The whole life of the church is pointed toward the great glory that is to come. Grasping the hope of this future eschaton in the present moment, the church is enabled to live in faith despite the possibility of great suffering in the present or future and thus moves on with history toward its complete and final realization in the purposes of God.

A Dynamic Concept

Edmund Schlink conceives of the church in altogether dynamic terms. It is the "event" of the preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments that produce the "event" of the church, a living organism which is both

¹Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, op. cit., p. 383.

constituted by the "event" and is the "event." The church has an ontology, to be sure. The church is the people of God, a community, but it is a community whose chief characteristic is that which happens in it and a community which itself is a dynamic part of a dynamic history. The church is both an end in itself and a means to a greater end, the eschaton of history. The church is, therefore, well described by the name, "The Pilgrim People."

CHAPTER VII

LUTHERANISM AND THE CHURCH

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God's people . . .¹

--I Peter 2:9, 10 on the church

What can be said about contemporary Lutheranism and the church? With the investigation of the origins of the concepts of the church in the two major sources, Luther and the Confessions, and the examination of four theological schools in the contemporary scene, it ought now to be possible to draw some conclusions. The findings suggested will be discussed under five headings: Original and Contemporary Lutheranism in Retrospect; The Contemporary Concepts of the Church in Comparison; The Contemporary Concepts of the Church and their Theological Framework; The Theology of the Church and Life in the Church; Quo Vadis?

Original and Contemporary Lutheranism
in Retrospect

Each of the four contemporary concepts of the church described is claimed by its advocate to be the correct Lutheran concept. Each is presented as the true interpretation of

¹The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952), New Testament, p. 262.

Martin Luther, though the adulation of Luther may vary somewhat. The repristination school considers him its inviolable church father, worthy of every emulation, and the touchstone of Lutheran doctrine. The pietists revere him as a great fellow Christian, the author of the faith and liberty they proclaim. The Lundensians find their main inspiration in the genius of this man who, despite the handicaps of the sixteenth century, provides more than enough fruitful insights for us in the twentieth and is comparable only to St. Paul in his understanding of the gospel. The neo-Lutherans see him as the great theologian whose contributions have been accurately preserved in the Lutheran Confessions.

Furthermore, all four claim to interpret the Confessions correctly, albeit with differing approaches and moods. Repristination theology very nearly equates them with the revelation of God. The pietists have no such illusion, but are careful to substantiate their views on the basis of the Confessions so that they may be considered Lutheran. The Lundensians do not claim a Confessional theology, but they would not deny the teachings of the Confessions, and feel that their understanding of the gospel is in the best tradition of the meaning of the Confessions. The neo-Lutherans see a return to the Confessions after a long absence as the way to revive the dynamics of the Reformation.

What can we say about these claims in retrospect? Our conclusion is they cannot all be substantiated and that they are, in fact, counter claims. The doctrine of the church is not an exception to the widely recognized judgment that Luther-

anism presents a confused and contradictory picture of its relationship to its origins. Lutherans cannot say that they have adhered to the concept of the church in original Lutheranism while admitting that there are divergencies in other areas of their teaching. Each claim to fidelity to the original Reformation concept must be examined separately. No general statement can be made that Lutheranism holds and teaches Luther's or the Confessions' concept of the church. This can be illustrated by a brief examination of the attitudes of the four schools toward the basic concepts, Word, faith, and the church.

The repristination school perpetuates the error of the seventeenth century in dissolving the tension between Word and faith. While Luther had taught a severe antinomy between the objective character of God's action toward men and the subjective character of man's response to this activity, Pieper neutralizes the human side of the God-man relationship by making faith entirely divine. Faith is not the gift of grace which is at the same time the real response of men, but only a divine gift, completely devoid of any human qualification of participation. Word and faith merge into one entity. In a further deterioration of Luther's dynamic view of the human-divine interchange, Pieper intellectualizes the character of the Word, transforming it into a series of correct propositions deducted from a divine book. Faith is turned into the divine agency which is able to accept the truthfulness of those propositions. Although Pieper does not deny the fiducia aspect of faith, he does not permit faith to be understood in any way which recognizes any activity on the part of men. For

example, the word "accept" is vehemently denied as a correct description of the human activity in the faith act.

Committed to this supernaturalistic motif, Pieper is forced to cling to the old pre-Biblical criticism theory of verbal inspiration and to assert the inerrancy of the Biblical documents, something which Luther did not do even without the knowledge of later Biblical criticism. Faced with irrefutable evidence of Biblical errors, the repristination theologians retreat to the original Biblical documents which, not being extant, cannot be examined.

This whole mood is carried over into the concept of the church. Whereas Luther conceived of the church as a human-divine community, this school limits the definition to the divine side and views the church as a supernatural entity composed of the individuals elected by God to faith. The "invisible" church is the true church. Being unable to defend the empirical church as perfect, Pieper invokes the idea that the unseen church is the real one in somewhat the same way as he clings to the original documents of the Bible. The key to Luther's understanding of the church, the community concept, is almost entirely lost. The definition of the church as people of God has been shifted to mean only the addition of the individuals, the coetus electorum.

It must be admitted that much evidence can be found in Luther for such a position but in only part of his thought. The repristination position has taken one side of Luther and expanded it into the whole of Luther. Unfortunately it has too often been the most dogmatic mood of Luther that is maintained.

8

The pietists have committed a similar error but in a different way. The subjective side of the God-man relationship has been expanded until it nearly dominates the whole system. I say nearly for the degree of divergency is not as great as in the repristination school. The objective-subjective scheme which Hallesby uses is an attempt to capture the whole view of Luther and the Confessions, but his own interest is so clearly that of man's response to the actions of God that the subjective prejudice colors the whole approach. Whereas the repristination school dehumanizes Luther's concepts of Word, faith, and the church, Hallesby has a tendency to humanize faith and the church. The dynamic of Luther's concept of the Word is fairly well maintained by Hallesby although muted by the excessive interest in the psychological aspects of man's response to the divine activity.

This interest in the human character of faith is projected into the view of the church. It is the individual and his faith that are the keystone of the church's being, although the Christian's life is pictured as incomplete until it finds expression in a community. The difficulties which attend the attempt to think of the empirical church as one and holy are solved by insisting that the people of God are only the "really saved," the pure church. Since only God knows who these people are, Luther's idea of the visible-invisible character of the church is maintained, but the individual-community relationship is shifted. Luther did not put individual before community. On the contrary, Luther seems to put community first, although in saying this, we must remember that Luther

never forgot the individualistic character of the faith act.

The Lundensians and New-Lutherans agree essentially on the concept of the Word and preserve faithfully Luther's understanding. Any differences between them are of little interest to this general discussion. The relationship between the Word and faith is not as clear. The Lundensians admit the paradoxical character of this relationship and discern very clearly Luther's views. They have the tendency, however, to emphasize the dynamic character of the Word of God to such a degree that the participation of the individual in the response to this activity is nearly obliterated. This is more easily seen in their concept of the church. They picture the church as a divine reality with which the individual is merged or, one is tempted to say, into which he is submerged. This divine being of the church, which they call the corpus Christi, is so heavily weighted toward the community emphasis that it is very difficult to understand just what role the Lundensians want the individual to play in it, even though, formally speaking, they provide for the incorporation of the individual into it. They are willing to emphasize the fellowship aspect of the church, but this is done against the background of an ontology which seems to mean something more than the people themselves. Luther was not so subtle in his ontology. For him, the church is the people of God and this is its reality, although it is also true that this people came into being through the divine activity of God and that Christ lives in this community in such a way that it is quite correct to call it the body of Christ. One is reluctant to say that the Lun-

densians have departed from Luther because their equation of the being of the church with the body of Christ is so unclear. It appears rather that they have gone "beyond" Luther. Whether or not they have gone "beyond" the New Testament is a subject for further study.

The new-Lutherans speak of faith in a manner closer to Luther's own ways of expression. Faith is both human and divine, both wholly an act of man and a gift of God. They can speak of faith as decision and acceptance and yet maintain that it is pure grace. The clear exposition of this dialectic is maintained in the concept of the church where the communal and individualistic emphases are placed side by side and vigorously maintained. The community of the church comes before the individual and yet it is composed of individuals. It is more than the addition of the individuals and yet it is only the individuals who are its reality. The church is brought about by the divine activity and yet that which is brought about is a human community, a community defined in terms of both the human love relationship and the divine activity.

We have referred more to Luther than the Confessions in this discussion. This is because, as we explained in Chapter II, the Confessions occupy a somewhat ambiguous position in their relation to Luther. If the Confessions are viewed against the background of Luther, one can think of them as speaking in one voice with Luther. The deficiencies of the Confessions, especially the tendencies to leave certain matters unsaid or at least unclear, are made up by the fuller and more profound observations of Luther. If the Confessions are

interpreted without reference to Luther, their ambiguity is intensified, and this pertains especially to the doctrine of the church. The latitude which the Augustana permits on the doctrine of the church can account for many of the divergencies revealed in this study. All four schools can claim confessional adherence to a degree. This freedom is violated by the reprobation school, however, when it reads into the Confessions the views of the century following and undermines the communal concept of the Augustana with its individualistic emphasis. The pietists may be closer to the Augustana's meaning, but twist the subjective aspect of faith out of all proportion to the Confession's understanding and distort their concept of the church accordingly. In my opinion, the neo-Lutherans, with a greater interest in the Confessions than in Luther, and thus subject to the dangers of an isolated interpretation of them, nevertheless come closer to the Confession's teaching on the church than the Lundensians, whose greater interest is Luther.

In any case, the general conclusion is valid. There is no clear and complete relationship between Lutheranism and Luther on the concept of the church.

The Contemporary Concepts of the Church in Comparison

Of greater importance than the relationship of contemporary and original Lutheranism is the question of the relationships among the contemporary schools. It is at this point the crucial questions concerning the Lutheran concept of the church are raised. Our conclusion is that the differences between the schools here presented are so deep and serious

that despite certain important ideas which they do hold in common, these four views cannot be said to explain or define a concept of the church. We are forced to the judgment that there are concepts of the church in Lutheranism rather than one common concept.

The discussion in the last section provided us with a key to illustrate the most important differences. We suggested there that the reprobation school displayed a view of the church which is individualistic in nature. The coetus electorum is really a numerus electorum and not a fellowship and thus a fundamentally individualistic conception.¹ The idea of community, of a communion of the members with each other, is absent. God exercises His sovereign will in choosing in eternity the individual to whom He will grant the gift of faith. The bestowal of this faith in history upon a particular individual entitles him to the benefits of the work of Christ, that is, eternal life at the end of history. The sum of these individuals is the church. The relationships between the individuals so ordained do not determine the church's being. If the elect do come together in an assembly for the conveniences of self-government or to carry out the ordinance of God to safeguard their inheritance through the help of the sacraments and discipline, it does not follow for Pieper that this assembly is necessary to a definition of the nature of

¹ Emil Brunner makes the same complaint against Zwingli and Calvin. Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953). This raises the interesting speculation that Pieper may be more Calvinistic than Lutheran in his concept of the church!

the church. Any benefits of a communal nature which arise from this getting together are purely fortuitous. In fact, the role of the individual qua individual might also be questioned.

Faith is defined in such supernaturalistic terms that whether or not the individual plays any role at all in acquiring it or keeping it, whether indeed it is his faith at all, might well be asked. However, the individual who possesses the faith given to him, whether or not at his behest, is the individual who is the church and he alone.

The pietists, who prefer the title "God's Family on Earth" for the church, begin with the individual, too, but posit that the individuals together form a community as a completion and enrichment of the life of faith. The method of acquiring faith is here different from that of the first system, for the individual is the real responder to God's initiative and becomes the one who takes the full responsibility for both the acceptance and the rejection of the offer of grace. Nevertheless, it is the individual's relationship to God which is the root and base of the concept. Upon that relationship are built the other relationships of the individuals to one another which create a community, a community good and helpful and necessary to the individual's continued well-being although not necessary to the real end of faith, eternal salvation.

The Lundensians make community the overriding key to the church, nearly to the point of excluding the individual. The church is a reality apart from and in spite of the reaction of the individual to God's action. This theology does not

neglect the individual in its total view, but it does assign him to a secondary role in its understanding of the real nature of the church.

The neo-Lutherans are not quite as easy to fit into neat categories. Community and individual are held in dialectic tension. The individual responds to the "event" of God's action in preaching and the sacraments and in so doing becomes part of that which called him--the church. However carefully this tension is maintained by the neo-Lutherans, it seems clear that it is the community that takes precedence. In the last analysis, the church constituted by the "event" is necessary for the gospel to reach the individual and it is the church which enfolds the individual to its bosom. It can be said, therefore, that this view begins with community and ends with the individual. It gives a real place to the individual but makes the community more than simply a series of relationships between individuals and more than the sum of individuals.

These Lutheran views vary, then, from the completely individualistic, with the exclusion of the communal, to the completely communal, with the near exclusion of the individual. The two variants in between begin at different points, one with the individual and the other with community.

It appears that the variants within Lutheranism are as wide as those of all Protestantism. This suggestion must be qualified by a statement regarding the framework in which these concepts are couched. There are limits to the variations and the four schools share certain difficulties. For example, all of the concepts here involved are Christological in their orien-

tation. The repristination school is perhaps not as clearly so despite their insistence upon the absolute character of the vicarious satisfaction. The figure of the electing God looms so large that the image of the merciful Christ is somewhat muted. The four schools disagree as to the meaning of the atonement, the nature of the presence of Christ in the world and the character of the eschaton, but they are agreed as to the central position of Christ and commonly use the Christological approach.

There is also general agreement as to freedom from form in the church. Even the Lundensians, who make structure the prime category in the concept of the church, demand freedom of form. This means specifically the denial of the institutional character of the church as a basic category of her nature. In some sense, of course, every concept of the church includes the institutional aspect, even if it is construed as the "improper" church, but the Lutherans are united in refuting the Roman Catholic conception of the church as a legal administrative institution.

In each of the four schools, faith is the chief category in the relationship between God and man and thus a major ingredient of the church, despite the variances as to what this actually means. In each case, there is an apathy or even a repugnance for the idea that good works are a constituting factor in the church, although in the pietist and New Lutheran views the place of love and service receives a great deal of attention.

A common difficulty is the uneasy way in which the church is related to the state. The "old" views isolate themselves com-

pletely from society. The Neo-Lutherans tackle the problem somewhat hesitantly and come up with no real answers. The Lundensians are the most successful at this point but leave us with a folk church idea that seems to betray their basic assumption that the church must be free in order to be the conscience of society.

Another difficulty held in common by contemporary Lutheranism is the determination of its relationship to the ecumenical movement. The followers of Francis Pieper have a nearly hysterical attitude about pure doctrine which results in a completely exclusivistic church organization. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod permits no relationship with any church which does not accept its whole doctrinal position. This means, of course, isolation from nearly all of Lutheranism as well as the rest of Protestantism. It is recognized that Christians do exist in other denominations and that the Missouri Synod is not the only church, since the church is the addition of the unseen members of the elect, but the slightest deviation from their doctrinal system requires complete separation from other church bodies, even to the point of the refusal to be present when prayer is offered by the offending group. Sometimes this principle is softened to the extent that co-operation in certain "external" matters is permitted, as, for example, the use by the Missouri Synod of the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches in the U. S. A. The fine line which is drawn between "external" and "sacred" matters involves this Lutheran church, the main exponent of the repristination school, in

logical gymnastics close to casuistry.

The pietists operate on a different principle, being willing to fellowship with anyone in whom they recognize the proper spirituality. In carrying out this principle in practice, they become involved in the ambiguous position of denouncing fellow Lutherans who hold the same confessional doctrines as they and yet are in fellowship with others who deny their doctrines but have a kinship in their religious experience. This leads very often to a retreat from too close an association with the official organized ecumenical agencies, such as the World Council of Churches, and to an alliance with the fundamentalistic free church groups and sometimes to an extreme sympathy for the fringe groups, such as the Pentecostals. This behavior from a movement within Lutheranism which claims an allegiance to the Lutheran Confessions and thus to traditional Christianity is confusing indeed.

Both the Lundensians and the neo-Lutherans declare themselves committed to the ecumenical movement and consider this a mandate growing out of their concept of the church. The Lundensians are more successful in clarifying their position. They are not as committed to the language of the Confessions as the Lutherans and prefer to think in terms of the "fundamental motifs" of Christianity. They are willing to think of agreement in doctrine as being primarily a matter of the mutual understanding of the gospel. The neo-Lutherans have the same compulsion to participate in the ecumenical movement, and see in this activity the possibility of exhibiting their concern for the unity of the church. At the same time, however, they hold to

a more rigid conception of doctrine and include a wider area in their concern for pure doctrine. As a consequence, they have great difficulty in making clear just what the limits of the "agreement in doctrine" principle are and how this principle is made practicable.

The four concepts can be compared, not only in terms of their differences, such as the example of the community-individual relationship, or their likenesses and difficulties, as suggested above, but also in regard to the questions which the concept of the church is supposed to answer. The first two, the "old" views, are not really concerned with the question of the church. Their central problem is salvation. "How can I be saved?" is the question which the Christian faith seeks to answer, in their opinion, and the basic question in theology. The concern for one's own soul is the only valid theme for theological exploration and all is bent to alleviate this anxiety. Both systems are then, in this sense, subjectivistic, whatever may be their claim to a "subjectiveless" theology. A subjectivistic concern may pose a completely objective answer, as in the reprobation school. Both schools center their interest about the end of the individual, his eternal destiny, and this is done to the exclusion of any real interest in history or the world. When the question of salvation is answered in their theology, the problem of the church recedes into near insignificance as a theological challenge. If one is saved, what does the church really matter? The church assumes a certain importance as a practical concern, for it is an instrument for safeguarding the salvation process, or even providing it, but it has no importance in itself. It is a means

to an end, with the end far outweighing the means in importance. The question, "What is the church?" is therefore never really asked. The church is assumed to have no reality in itself. It is an arrangement, a convenience. The kind of arrangement is predicated on the kind of salvation process envisioned, but the church is not, in the last analysis, a theological problem. The question addressed is, "What then shall we make the church in order to best implement salvation?" There is no concern about the ontology of the church. Even in the supernaturalistic concept of the church, the supernaturalism is really vested in the salvation act and not in the church itself. The church becomes a strange "humanized" supernatural entity.

The Lundensians ask and answer the question, "What is the church?" One may disagree with their answer, but I am forced to admit that they have addressed themselves to the right question.¹ For Luther, the question about the reality of the church did not need to be asked. It was real enough to him, as we have tried to show, and whenever he talked about the church he was talking about its reality. This is not altogether clear to the post-Kantian age and the Lundensians have attempted to delineate the problem in clearer terms. This is not to suggest that they have, in my opinion, therefore, done so entirely in the correct spirit of Luther, but rather

¹ I find myself in agreement with Claude Welch who calls attention to the dangers of insisting that Paul's use of the body of Christ is the best vehicle for the ontology of the church. To make corpus Christi literal and not metaphorical is to create linguistic confusion and suggests unprovable and misleading assumptions about Paul's language. See Claude Welch The Reality of the Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 180ff.

that they have realized more clearly than any of the others what the real problem is. They have seen that the church constitutes a problem in itself which cannot be treated as a lesser problem than salvation. They do not stop with the doctrines of God and salvation, but go on to face the doctrine of the church, not as an altogether new question, but as one which deserves major consideration. The church is not merely a means to an end but an end in itself.

The Neo-Lutherans realize that there is a problem concerning the ontology of the church, but nevertheless, have not addressed themselves to it. Interested primarily in the activity of God, they are concerned with the question of "Where is God working?" For them the church is the answer--it is the arena of God's activity. In adopting this attitude, they reflect the attitude of the Augustana, which, as we tried to show, is oriented to the question of "Where is the church?" and not "What is the church?" The interest is concentrated on the church as "becoming" rather than the church as "being." The Neo-Lutherans seem to say that the question of the being of the church cannot be fully answered. We are limited, they suggest, to such facets of the nature of the church as where it is, what it is like in its more obvious manifestations, and descriptions of how it works and what it accomplishes.

The conclusion is inescapable that although the Lutherans do have some common ideas about the church, there are differences of such a profound nature that one can no longer speak of the Lutheran concept of the church without specifying which interpretation is meant.

The Contemporary Concepts of the Church
and their Theological Framework

These two conclusions, namely, that the contemporary Lutheran concepts of the church cannot be assumed to be faithful to the original concept in Luther and the Confessions and that contemporary Lutheranism is deeply divided on the doctrine of the church, lead us to ask two questions: "What was the original cause of this confusion?" and "What is the present root of the difficulties?"

Historically, the cause of the confusion is obvious. Luther's dynamic concept of the church was not wholly captured by the Augsburg Confession, the chief confessional document of Lutheranism. This was not the fault of the Augustana. Its writers did not foresee that it would become such an important document. Although the doctrine of the church was certainly one of the main issues of the Reformation period, the particular context in which the Augustana was prepared, that is, the cause of presenting the Lutheran position in as ecumenical and as traditional a manner as possible, did not provide the proper vehicle for a definitive statement on the church. The period of controversy which followed Luther's death did not emphasize the church, and this doctrine was put into a position of secondary importance. The age of orthodoxy which followed the Formula of Concord developed a theology which was at variance with important ideas of Luther. The dynamic of Luther's thought was gradually dissipated. Lutheranism entered a stage in which the Confessions were seen from the point of view of later history, primarily that of orthodoxy,

and not in their own historical context. This was especially damaging when it did not permit the correct interpretation of Luther to shed light upon the meaning of the Confessions. The Lutheran position was assumed to be that taught by the seventeenth century fathers. When the protest of the Pietist movement came, the Lutheran Confessions were elastic enough to permit the movement to remain within their confines. One important reason for this was that the Pietist movement specifically accepted the Confessions and was not interested in challenging any particular doctrine although, in fact, they actually did so.

This situation received an "overhauling" in the twentieth century when Luther research revived the real Luther and pointed out the variances between Luther and these two "old" Lutheran systems. This research also considered the concept of the church, and in the Luthersian and the New Lutheran schools we can observe two examples of the results of this "new look" at the Lutheran heritage. We have, therefore, on the one hand, two "new" views which challenge the two "old" views. But the situation becomes more complicated when, on the other hand, as we have tried to show, the two "old" views are themselves in disagreement, and the two "new" views, although showing many areas of agreement, have not made a completely common cause of their concepts of the church. By noting this, we are not necessarily rendering a judgment as to which of the four may be right. It must not be assumed that a Lutheran idea must be in accord with Luther in order to be Lutheran, although as we have shown, this is common Lutheran practice, and one which only adds to the confusion. We

are only saying that, historically speaking, the lines of divergence are easily drawn.

More important than the reasons for the original causes of the variances is the question regarding the real root of the trouble in the contemporary scene. Given these four major Lutheran schools, what is it that prevents their finding a common concept of the church? As has already been suggested in the discussion of the first two conclusions, it is my conviction that the difficulty does not lie in the concept of the church itself. Each concept of the church is consistent with the theological presuppositions of the system. Just as Luther's understanding of the church grew out of his understanding of justification, so each of the schools described has produced a concept of the church dependent upon the theological framework in which it lies. Given the particular views of the Word and faith, the concepts of the church taught by these theologies are logically inevitable. The reason it was considered necessary to preface each concept of the church with a general introduction to the whole theology of the particular school was to document this conclusion. This needs to be illustrated in further detail. We shall use Luther as a standard with which the four theologies may be compared.

The ellipse may be used as a figure to describe the basic pattern of Luther's theology.¹ The ellipse has two foci. They are necessary to the ellipse and neither has precedence

¹ I have borrowed this figure from Karl Barth who uses it to describe the thought of Schleiermacher. Karl Barth, Protestant Thought from Rousseau to Ritschl, tr. Brian Cozens (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), p. 345.

over the other with respect to either placement or importance. They are absolutely equal and equally necessary. The two foci in Luther's theology may be called the Word and faith. One may be exhausted at length without mentioning the other but, is never complete without the antinomy of the second. These two foci may also be called God and man or man and God. They may represent such terms as objective and subjective, or historical and psychological, or even perhaps historie and geschichte, or essence and existence. For Luther they were a paradox and ran through his entire theological thought world. They were his system.

In reprimatination theology the ellipse has been resolved into a circle with one center, one focus. The substance of theology is centered about the Word, the absolute revelation. Faith is reinterpreted into categories which are completely subservient to this Word principle. Faith is a gift of the Word. It is controlled by the Word from eternity and throughout its perseverance to the end. It is determined by the Word in its entirety. Faith is an entity which exists wholly within the shadow of the absolute. The Word which is at the center and completely in control is the kind of Word that can assume such responsibility. It is a completely divine Word and as such must assume the character of inerrancy and infallibility and in this way elevated to the realm of absolute supernaturalness. Truth is conceived as a golden ring. It cannot be broken at any point or the whole system collapses.

The kind of church concept that arises from this is simple enough. There is no community here, for the Word is in such con-

trol that it needs no community for its life. It can exist completely and independently in a book. The relationship of men to truth can and indeed must exist in a one to one relationship. Any community which assumes any importance is a threat to this absolute Word, for it would vie with its supremacy and find satisfaction in its own existence, which would lead to a sense of independence. Under these circumstances the pattern of isolation and exclusiveness and possessiveness is understandable. The banner of pure doctrine is hoisted. Biblical criticism, or the idea of change, or suggestions of mutuality in theological interchange and growth would, of course, be enemies of the whole concept. No change in this concept of the church can be expected without a change in the whole approach to the theological enterprise.

The pietist view is more difficult to describe. There is an attempt to keep the ellipse. The tensions of Reformation theology are understood, and each concept is discussed in the framework of the objective and subjective. The burden always falls upon the subjective, however. It is religious experience which, frankly admitted, is the key to the Christian religion. The figure is somewhat like a lopsided ellipse (the mathematicians will pardon the suggestion!). The center of the ellipse, coming somewhere between the two usual foci, is faith and faith understood in terms of the individual decision, that is, in terms of the God experience. It can be called, in this instance, the psychological center. The focus of the historical, or the Word, is still present and is a controlling factor, and the faith focal point must always be understood in terms of the ex-

istence of the Word, but the Word is not equal to or in real tension with faith.

In this approach, it is quite apparent that the individual must be given primary importance for the controlling feature is faith understood in the personal terms of individual religious experience. There is room also for the community idea although the relation of the individual and community is somewhat lopsided, in favor of the individual, in somewhat the same way as the ratio of the two foci of the ellipse. The concept of the church is consistent with the theology.

In this view, the concern with the psychology of the salvation process would be mandatory. The striving for a pure church, the lack of concern for theological propositions, the withdrawal from the world, the milieu of religious disciplines, are all consequences of the theological framework. The Bible is no longer a dogmatic textbook but instead a composite of religious experiences which is read and shared by the present Christian community.

The pietists have a new kind of scholastic theology, as firm and as final as the orthodoxists, but dealing with different categories and starting from different premises. Given their theological environment, they could have but one concept of the church.

The Lundensian system might be pictured as somewhat similar to the reipristination as a circle with one focus, but quite different from that theology in content. The one center could still be called the Word but it must be understood in a very different way. It is a Word which is full of paradox and

dynamic, but is nevertheless the single controlling factor in the theological system. There is no opposite pole, no room for any kind of subjectivity or existentialism. "God is love" is the controlling principle and this is a principle with a static quality. Even though this agape may act, and, indeed, does so, the action comes out of its own initiative completely, without the necessity of a reaction in any way equal to it. God comes down to man. Man does not go up to meet Him. There is no eros, no striving of man after God. Truth is not a golden ring which must be complete to be truth, but rather the center of the circle which radiates out to fill the whole circle. It needs only one center, one "fundamental motif." Within this center may lie myriads of mysteries, for God is beyond the comprehension of any man and surely beyond the encompassing power of any word or even any concept. Man can speak of God only in symbols. Yet his religion is fastened upon one point and all else is secondary and subservient to it.

With this beginning, it is not surprising to see the development of a somewhat mystical pattern in the concept of the church. It is this power, this single principle in action, which creates the church. Even individuals are not really necessary, even though it is for them that this power comes. With this kind of reliance upon a somewhat vague idea of being a stress upon the ontological nature of the church could be expected. The boundaries of the church would be completely unknown, the idea of a pure church absurd, and even the fruits of faith quite beside the point.

In the neo-Lutheran view, we can see the reappearance

of the ellipse. Here there is a real attempt to establish the two foci in such a way that neither is dominant. The Word is postulated in a way reminiscent of Luther's dynamic understanding and not unlike the Lundensian view. Faith, without apology, is made a real response of the individual, and the renewal of the Christian life is made a necessary subsequence to justification. Theology is approached from a completely objective standpoint and then again in the next moment with a completely subjective orientation. Both are necessary to an understanding of their system. God acts and man responds.

In the concept of the church which issues from this pre-supposition the dynamic of the church can be clearly seen. Community and individual are put into a tension somewhat similar to the two foci. If they are not exactly in the same relationship, and the community placed in the greater honor, it is because the community itself can be described in terms of both Word and faith. There can be a community of faith as well as an individual of faith. The community of faith is sympathetic to the dynamic understanding of history and the idea of the consensus of confession. The continuity of the church does not rest only in the recreation of the apostolic faith but in the persistence of that faith through the centuries in the community. The precedence of community over individual does not do violence to the tensions of Word and faith but rather is necessary to its correct delineation.

The conclusion is that Lutherans cannot deal successfully with the problem of the church by isolating it from the rest of their theology. Indeed, if they are to make any sub-

stantial headway toward a common concept of the church, they must investigate the basic concepts of their whole theology.

The Theology of the Church
and Life in the Church

It is important to note that there are two implications that should not be drawn from these three conclusions. It cannot be assumed, first, that these four theological concepts of the church are accurately reflected in the life of the Lutheran churches. Lutherans themselves often uncritically believe that their theological positions are correct images of the actual circumstances within their communities. Second, a subsequent conclusion cannot be drawn that Lutherans should not or cannot live together in one church because they do not hold to one common and fully mutually acceptable concept of the church.

We have described the repristination view as being nearly completely individualistic, and yet a sense of community does exist among those who hold this view. A prime example of this is the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the United States. Although the view of Pieper is the dominant theology in this church body and every teacher and pastor is required to hold and teach it and to keep silent in any area where he may disagree,¹ nevertheless, this Lutheran church has a strong and vital community sense. There is as much vitality within this denomination as in any other Lutheran church--perhaps even more. A very strong feeling of loyalty dominates this group. Their worship life has much to commend it. They are very active in

¹This was very clearly spelled out in the recent convention of the Missouri Synod in San Francisco in the summer of 1959.

every phase of the church's life, in missions, in stewardship, in charities, and in their interest in the secular communities. They exhibit, more than any other Lutheran church, a very creative interest in art, such as music, church architecture, the use of modern forms in worship, and in religious literature. They are very active in pursuing new methods in encouraging the application of their faith to family life, to education, both elementary and higher, and in the use of modern media of communication, such as television and radio. Their sense of community is often in-grown and limited, but it nevertheless is real and enjoyed and understood by their people.

The pietists, on the other hand, have often bargained away their community idea by an excessive preoccupation with the pure church. Although they do not have dogmatic qualifications for their members, they have adopted other and as rigid criteria. Religious experience has often become defined and demanded in such a way as to nearly destroy the kind of human relationships necessary for community life. Pietism has degenerated in large areas in Lutheranism into a rigid legalism which has cut off any relationship with the larger body of Christians who do not share their particular understanding of discipline. The warm sense of brotherhood which pietism officially seeks to instill among their people becomes, in the end, a narrow paternalism and a condemnation of anyone who suggests any disagreement. Some of the more sectish manifestations of Lutheranism have come from them. The continual threat of such divisive attitudes has served to nullify the creation of any real community.

The Lundensians, who have tried to serve the cause of the ecumenical church and to pervade their own Lutheranism with a renewed idea of the necessity of love and responsibility, have had the greatest success in promoting their understanding outside of their own denomination. Their rediscovery of the church has brought no significant help to the deep problems of church life in Sweden. It most likely has done just the opposite, that of encouraging an acceptance of the status quo regarding the folk church and thus simply accepting the rather droll community sense of the Church of Sweden. Lundensian theology has given the Lutheran churches a new status in the ecumenical movement and promoted understanding among the churches, but it has not had the power to create any significant renewal within its own borders. In asking the right questions and to a large extent, giving the right answers, it has remained a rather cold theology which has not been able to communicate to the rank and file of Lutheranism. The theological rediscovery of the church has not led to a rediscovery of the community within the community.

I find the Neo-Lutherans more difficult to assess at this point. There has been a rather remarkable renaissance in German church life growing out of the church struggle of the 1930's and continuing in the present. But whether this ought to be attributed to this theological revival or whether the revival was simply an accompaniment of the renewal is difficult to say. In any case, the church concept of the Neo-Lutherans has been most congenial to the rather magnificent efforts of the German Lutherans to rectify their weaknesses. The interest

in the ecumenical movement has been of great importance to the life of those churches. The gradual taking over of the idea of stewardship, so foreign to the old Lutheranism, has been of great importance. The expression of the laity's new consciousness of its responsibility in the church is illustrated in the Lutheran co-operation in the Kirchentag, which is a phenomenon equalled nowhere else in Protestantism. The co-operative attempt to reach the neglected strata of society through the Evangelische Akademie has been of enormous importance to all of Lutheranism.¹ The charitable work of the churches, always strong in Germany, has received new impulses.

One cannot say, however, that any profound awakening has occurred in the German churches as many hoped for after World War II, and there are many areas of church life still relatively untouched. One of the areas still very unsatisfactory in my opinion is that of the relationship between church and state.

Outside of the Synodical Conference in the United States, of which the Missouri Synod is the dominant member, the American Lutherans have never assumed a definite theological posture. Americans have borrowed much of their knowledge of the practical aspects of church government from their sister Free and Reformed churches on the American scene. There has been no real consideration of or understanding of the nature of the church. Yet there has been an amazing sense of community in these churches.

¹The most significant study of this movement in English known to this writer is Loren Halvorson, "German Protestantism in Dialogue with the World" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1958).

It has been quite stilted at times, and isolated from the larger sense of the church catholic, but it cannot be denied that the American Lutherans, without giving any great thought to the theological base for community, have, among themselves, developed a strong community sense.

Some Lutherans will interpret this study as a validation for their contention that, since the Lutherans do not wholly agree with each other, they must remain in separate ecclesiastical camps until that day when full and complete doctrinal agreement is achieved. This study, however, actually points in the opposite direction. If the Augsburg Confession holds any authority in Lutheranism, as is nearly universally acknowledged, the position of the Augustana that the unity of the church is more important than the agreement between men, or to put it more honestly, between theologians, on every doctrinal point, should also be acknowledged. The real Lutheran policy would then be to find ways to live together with other Christians under the generous and proud magna charta of Lutheranism, the Augsburg Confession! Lutherans must either abandon their chief confession or respond to its ecumenical demands. How to initiate and carry out this call to unity is, of course, a great problem in itself even if it is agreed that it exists. We shall close our study with some thoughts in this direction.

Quo Vadis?

Where do the Lutherans go from here? There can be no attempt to assume the role of a seer in this study, but there are some lines of development which can be commented upon in the light of what has already been said.

Bishop Nygren in addressing the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Hannover in 1952 suggested the goal "Forward to Luther!"¹ There is no doubt that the Luther research of this century has been of great benefit to Lutheranism. As has been already suggested, the full dynamic of Luther's theology has not been captured by Lutheranism, and to the extent that his insights might be used to revive the sleeping giant, new light from Luther would be of value. And it is true that the current Luther research is not at an end. It ought to be pursued with every diligence. But to make this the end of the road would be to return to a type of romanticism which has plagued the church too often. The logical conclusion of this development by itself would be to create another Luther myth. He cannot be the only spokesman to the twentieth century. Any hope of real address to the situation must be on a broader front.

The neo-Lutherans have posited the return to the Confessions. In the peculiar circumstances of the church struggle in Germany, this was a good strategy. The appeal to this origin of the historic faith was effective in a land where the Confessions had fallen into great disrepute. The re-interpretation of the Confessions was timely and effective. It brought new life into the church, restored the Confessions to their proper role and proper interpretation. But again, to consider this the final goal is to imperil the whole enterprise

¹Carl E. Lund-Quist, ed. Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (Gungenhausen: Riedel Buchdruckerei, 1952), p. 49.

of meeting the problems of this age. If nothing more than this is done, it will not be long until this theology, now fresh and helpful, will become another reprobation theology and the Neo-Lutherans of today will become the Old Lutherans of tomorrow, just as they did in the nineteenth century. As valid as the Confessions have been and still are, they do belong to the sixteenth century and must be seen in that historical light.

Nothing less than a re-examination of the very phenomena of theology in Lutheranism will do. The foci themselves must come under scrutiny. It is not as though this has not been going on for the last century and a half. It is rather that Lutheranism as a whole must recognize the necessity and become part of the enterprise.

If any such re-examination is to have any real effect in Lutheran dogmatics, the great cleavage between systematic studies and Biblical exegesis in the present theological scene must be resolved. Lutheranism's theology has always been dominated by the dogmaticians. Unless this prevalence is broken and real conversation among the theological disciplines ensues, there can be little hope that any real self-criticism will result. The plain fact is that the challenge to dogmatic theology by historical criticism and existentialism has not been accepted by the Lutheran dogmaticians. Hermann Diem is quite right in saying,

It [that is, dogmatics] exploits or attacks the conclusions of the latter [that is, the results of Biblical exegesis in line with historical criticism], according as it finds them agreeable or not, yet for the most part it passes right over the deep problems of historical criticism with a curious unconcern or perhaps embarrassment, and not seldom constructs its own theses as though

the last two centuries of theological development had not taken place or had really been satisfactorily terminated. As a result exegesis on its part has been compelled to ask questions or to make formulations which ignore the dogmatic efforts of our time with equal detachment and aloofness.¹

There is, in fact, a suspension of discussion between the two disciplines, and the possibilities of any mutual contribution are conjectural.

In comparing the two fields of endeavor, it is clear that it is exegesis which has played the aggressive role while dogmatics has been concerned primarily with preserving and protecting although at the same time, reinterpreting the tradition.²

Within the field of dogmatics there are, nevertheless, lines of development which hold some promise. At the Third World Conference on Faith and Order in Lund in 1952, the decision was made to lay aside the question of the nature of the church for the moment and pursue Christology as a more promising field of endeavor. "The way to unity is through the center," the conference said.³ This is a way full of promise for new approaches to the interpretation of the Word. There are dangers here, too, as have been pointed out,⁴ for this study, too, might become doctrinaire. Nevertheless the charge of docetism often leveled against Lutheranism and even against

¹Hermann Diem, Dogmatics, trans. Harold Knight (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), p. 40.

²Ibid.

³Oliver S. Tomkins, ed. The Third World Conference on Faith and Order (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1952), p. 15.

⁴Edmund Schlink, "Christus und die Kirche," Kerygma und Dogma, I, 3 (July, 1955), pp. 208ff.

the general Lutheran sympathy for the Christological approach to the Bible must be carefully explored and in this enterprise there is every opportunity for new enlightenment for everyone involved.

The second focus, faith, must also be re-examined. This has been done so often within the Lutheran context, however, that a repetition of this would not seem to hold many possibilities. The current interest in the conversations between Protestants and Roman Catholics seems to this writer to have more potential.¹ Here the real challengers meet and help each other.²

In addition to the specific doctrinal studies thus implied, the creation of the proper milieu for theological development is of great importance. The cataclysmic events of the twentieth century have drawn great sections of Lutheranism out of their isolation and there are great opportunities to pursue goals unattainable since the writing of the Formula of Concord.

One necessary ingredient for the proper development is what has been termed the recognition of a "common history."³

¹Peter Brunner, "Lutheran Expectations and Hope in Regard to Catholics," Lutheran World, III, 3 (Dec., 1956), p. 223.

²One of the examples of the possible dialogue is K. E. Skydsgaard, One in Christ (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957). The Lutheran World Federation has recently made Skydsgaard the head of an Inter-Confessional Institute which plans to study Roman Catholic theology.

³This is a phrase employed by Albert C. Outler, The Christian Tradition and the Unity We Seek (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 38. It is as Father Florovsky expressed it at the Lund Conference, "Ecumenism in time as well as space." Quoted by Outler, op. cit., p. 39.

If, as the neo-Lutherans suggest, the Augsburg Confession is the common property of all Christendom and is not peculiarly Lutheran, the converse must also be true, namely, that all of the confessions of Christendom belong to the Lutherans, that is, they are a part of the development of the church catholic and are thus in some manner both the responsibility of and the property of the Lutherans. The Lutheran cannot fix his eyes solely upon the Reformation which gave him birth but must consider the patristic age, the schism between East and West, and the development of both Catholicism and Protestantism since the Reformation as part of his own development. All is a part of his treasure. He can profit from the knowledge here gained, the mistakes here made, the community here created by a common search for truth. The "common history" idea is somewhat unwieldy, yet the cultivation of the proper attitude in this respect would influence enormously the approach to dogmatic problems.

The second ingredient necessary for any really fruitful development to come out of the present dilemma is equally as difficult to define precisely. It can be called "living in community." Suggestions would be in order. The Lutheran World Federation is an example of how the interpenetration of ideas and the challenges of opposing views can bring, not compromise, but whole new approaches to problems and thereby bring renewal to the church. In the few short years that the Lutheran World Federation has been in operation, it has already softened the divisions within the Lutheran family and brought cross fertilization of attitudes which have made possible some cautious optimism. The Minneapolis Theses produced by the Third Assembly

in Minneapolis in 1957 are visible evidence of how a fragmented church can make elementary strides in putting itself together again.¹

Less dramatic examples could be cited in the numerous small mergers in Lutheranism in the past fifty years. The union of 1917, which brought together three quite different Lutheran backgrounds into the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (now The Evangelical Lutheran Church), has, in the half century since, brought into being a community which could never have existed without the initial coming together.²

In broader context, the ecumenical movement has brought about important changes in attitude and some real contributions in actual agreement as well as clarification of some complicated issues.³ If this movement can be permitted to keep its openness and its freedom and proceed at its own pace in a community of conversation, finding ways and means for the churches to live together for some generations, the possibility of gains in unity of understanding are good. The influence of what used to be a completely foreign element, Eastern Orthodoxy, has been felt deeply. The cross currents produced by the raising of such

¹The story of these theses is found in Carl E. Lund-Quist, ed. Proceedings of the Third Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1958) and in Martin Heineken, Christ Frees and Unites (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957).

²The history of this is well illustrated in E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene Fevold, The Lutheran Church among Norwegian-Americans (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960).

³A dramatic example is the doctrinal agreement achieved between the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India and the Church of South India.

questions as the meaning of tradition, eucharist and sacrifice, the ministry and apostolic succession, have produced significant results.¹

If the church, the community of faith and the Word, is indeed a pilgrim people, one of the adventures of its pilgrimage will be to learn to understand itself.

¹Sometimes this idea is expressed in "study in community." As an example, there is the result of eight years of studying the Lord's Supper together by a group of Lutheran and Reformed theologians in Germany. "Report on the Conversation concerning Holy Communion in the German Evangelical Church," Ecumenical Review, XI, No. 2 (January, 1959), p. 188.

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